

Prayer, Men, and Women

Gender is not a choice. It is a reality. It is a fundamental and God-given reality. Every human being was created either male or female, as part of the Lord God's specific and intentional design. According to the Scriptures, when the Lord God created humanity, He made them distinctly male and female, each with a specific role and purpose to fulfill.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

This passage highlights that gender is an important aspect of the Lord God's original design, purpose, and plan. In the image of God, both male and female were created. Thus, both male and female reflect aspects of God's divine nature. Both men and women share in equality, dignity, and worth, and yet, both were designed with complementary and distinct roles. Contrary to the proclamation of our world, gender is not a social construct. It is not a matter of one's personal preference. It is not a matter of one's individual choice. Rather, a person's gender was determined by the Lord God, in eternity past, before the foundation of the world was even laid. The Lord God is good, and He made His creation good. In His perfect and infinite wisdom, your gender is your correct gender. It is not a mistake. The Lord God does not make mistakes. In His perfect and infinite wisdom, the Lord God created you as you are for your good and His glory. Gender is a fundamental and unchanging reality. It is a reality that transcends man's opinion and surpasses the assertions of our culture. Each and every person was created either male or female with a distinct purpose that aligns with the Lord God's overarching will and plan for His creation.

Thus, it should come as no surprise that the Lord God sometimes gives unique and specific instructions for men and for women, particularly in the context of the church. The church is the household of God; it is a pillar and buttress of the truth, and as such, it must reflect His order and His design for creation. In the book of 1 Timothy, the Apostle Paul gave instruction to maintain proper order and conduct in the local church. The church at Ephesus faced many problems, including confusion over the roles of men and women, which were beginning to blur and overlap.

Please turn with me to the book of 1 Timothy. Our passage this morning is 1 Timothy 2:8-15. Over the next two weeks, we're going to be unpacking this passage. This morning we'll focus on vv8-10, and next Sunday we will finish up with vv11-15.

1 Timothy 2:8-15 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 9 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, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. 11 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.

This passage consists of three primary instructions, which all relate to the conduct of believers during the public gathering of the worship service: the men and their prayers (v8), the women and their adornment (vv9-10), and the women and their role in the church (vv11-15). This morning, we will focus on the men and their prayers (v8) and the women and their adornment (vv9-10).

As a reminder, in 1 Timothy 2:1-7, Paul urged the church to pray for all people.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

At the time Paul wrote this letter, false teachers had infiltrated the church in Ephesus and were promoting different doctrine. Their teaching possibly suggested that not all people could be saved, as Paul emphasized that prayers should be offered on behalf of all people, correcting the exclusivity of the false teachers. These teachers were spreading a false and distorted gospel, one that presented an imbalanced and sectarian view of salvation. These teachers had devoted themselves to myths and endless genealogies, promoting speculation rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. To address these errors, Paul urged the church to pray. He instructed that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people. The scope of the church's prayers is to be for everyone. There are no limitations, no discrimination, and no exclusions. All people, all different kinds of people, regardless of age, race, politics, or social and economic standing, are to be prayed for by the church. The reason being:

1 Timothy 2:3-4 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Contrary to the teaching at Ephesus, Paul reminded Timothy that salvation is for all people. Salvation is made free to all people by the gospel. The Lord God invites everyone, through the gospel, and no one is excluded. There is nothing that prevents the salvation of the most vile sinner on earth, but his own depravity and his own voluntary rejection of Jesus Christ. God's desire is for all men to be saved. God's desire is for all men to come to the knowledge of the truth, and this desire is consistent and reflective of His nature.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

The church is to pray for all men, not only because it is right and pleasing to the Lord God, not only because it is consistent with the will of the Lord God, but because there is only one God. You see, much like the world in which we live today, Ephesus was pluralistic, meaning the common belief was that there were many different pathways to God. It didn't matter who you worshipped, when you worshipped, or how you worshipped, just as long as your worship was sincere. In stark contrast, the Scriptures attest:

Isaiah 43:11 I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior.

Isaiah 45:5-6 I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you,

though you do not know me, 6 that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me;

Acts 4:11-12 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

The church is to pray for all men, because there is only one God for all men. The church is to pray for all people, because there is only one mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, who stands and intercedes between the Lord God and all people. Here, we see Christianity at both its narrowest and widest points. There is only one God, one Savior, one mediator, and one way to salvation. And yet the one way is open to all people.

Romans 3:29-30 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one. He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

The blessing of salvation, first given to the Jews, has been extended to the entire world. The blessing of salvation has been extended to all men, both Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, in light of this truth,

1 Timothy 2:8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

Paul now addresses the conduct that must be followed when the church gathers together corporately for prayer and worship. This verse teaches us three things about corporate prayer: who, where, and how. The "who" is the men of the church. It is the men who are instructed to pray. The "where" is the church, where public prayer is offered in every place. In other words, when the church gathers together and meets for its corporate worship, it is the men who are to lead in prayer.

In Greek, two words can be translated as men. One of the words is more general and means "mankind." This term is inclusive of both men and women. The other term is more specific and refers to men, in contrast to women. In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul uses the latter with its specific meaning. Paul was saying, in contrast to the women, I urge the men, in every place, to pray. How is this to be accomplished?

1 Timothy 2:8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

In every place, wherever public prayer is offered, men are to pray, lifting holy hands. Is Paul concerned with our physical posture during prayer and worship? Paul is not so much concerned with the posture of our prayer as he is with the purity of the one praying. He urges men to lead in prayer and worship with integrity, free from anger, animosity, conflict, rivalry, and hypocrisy. His point was not that we must raise our hands when we pray, but that the one who prays must have holy hands.

This reference to "holy hands" points back to temple worship in the Old Testament. God's people were required to wash their hands for ceremonial cleansing before coming to prayer. Likewise, before the priests could approach the Lord God to offer sacrifices in the tabernacle or temple, they

needed to wash and cleanse their hands. For them, clean hands symbolized a clean heart.

Isaiah 1:15-17 When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, 17 learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

The reference to “holy hands” represents our external behavior. It symbolizes a spiritually and morally pure life, unpolluted and unstained by evil, without which the Lord God cannot be approached. Thus, the prerequisite for effective prayer is a cleansed and holy life.

Psalm 66:18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

Proverbs 28:9 If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Whether in corporate worship or alone at home, it is useless to spread out your hands to the Lord God in prayer if they are dirty, if you are harboring sin and unrighteousness in your life. True and effective prayer requires purity of heart. The Lord God will not hear the prayers of those who nurture and cling to their sin.

At that time, in the church in Ephesus, there was one particular sin causing a multitude of problems: the sin of dissension.

1 Timothy 2:8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

The term quarreling refers to a person's thoughts or opinions, often in a negative sense. It describes your inner reasoning that leads to questioning, doubting, and then the disputing a matter. The fruit of our inner reasoning frequently manifests itself outwardly as tension, division, or argumentative behavior. In Romans 14:1, the word is used to describe someone who negatively passes judgment on another believer's opinions.

Romans 14:1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

“Quarreling over opinions” highlights a vital principle for the church in dealing with secondary issues. Doctrinal unity is essential on matters pertaining to salvation, such as the nature and character of God, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the authority of Scripture, and justification by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Jesus Christ alone. However, in all non-essential matters, those involving personal preferences and personal convictions, there must be Christian liberty and mutual charity. For instance, some believers may feel compelled to abstain from certain foods or activities, or to observe specific religious holidays, or to observe them in a particular way. In contrast, other believers may have a different view entirely. The church is to remain uncompromising on all essential doctrines of the Christian faith. However, we are also called to exercise grace, mercy, and longsuffering toward one another in matters of conscience. In all humility and gentleness, with patience, we must

bear with one another in love and strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Paul's counsel to the church is crystal clear. Do not allow secondary matters to become grounds for division or judgment. Do not allow matters of personal conviction to break the unity and peace of the brethren. Be fully convinced in your own mind (Romans 14:5), but do not judge or impose your convictions upon others. Arguing and quarreling over such issues is unhelpful and divisive. The unity of the church must take precedence over minor secondary disputes.

Romans 14:4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Romans 14:12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Dissension occurs when people argue intellectually with anger and wrath but without love. It arises when individuals prioritize their own opinions, preferences, and convictions over those of the Lord God, the Scriptures, and others. These kinds of quarrels and disputes are harmful to the body of Christ in many ways, but especially because they hinder our prayers. In Ephesus, the false teachers had created divisive and dissentious controversies rather than advancing the work of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And according to Paul, the result in the church was constant friction among those who were depraved in mind and deprived of the truth. Praying amidst these types of problems would have borne no fruit. Anger, wrath, slander, bitterness, gossip, envy, resentment, quarreling and disputes, make for some very salty and ineffective prayers. Christ Jesus addressed this issue in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:23-24 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Reconciliation must precede your worship. Peace and unity between brothers and sisters must precede your prayers. A man can lift up holy hands to the Lord God in prayer only if he has a right relationship with the Lord God, and only if he has a right relationship with others. The power and efficiency of our prayers are directly related to our purity and our obedience to the word of God.

Psalm 24:3-4 Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

This is why we are commanded to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Praying in Jesus' name means approaching the Lord God through who Christ is and what He has done, not merely attaching the phrase, in Jesus' name, to our prayers. Only those who have been redeemed, cleansed by His blood, and who draw near to the throne of grace through His mediation may ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in His holy presence. We do not come before the Lord God based on our own merit, but solely through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us by faith. His perfect sacrifice and ongoing intercession are the only grounds on which sinful people can approach a holy, holy, holy God.

Men, I urge you, in every place you should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or quarreling. This is pleasing in the sight of the Lord our God.

After addressing the men, Paul goes on to instruct the women, not about prayer, but about their appearance and conduct when the church gathers corporately.

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, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.

The term likewise is significant because it sets the context; Paul is still addressing the topic of public worship. In the corporate gathering, men are commanded to pray without anger or quarreling, and women are instructed to adorn themselves in a manner appropriate for the worship of the Lord God. The church at Ephesus had some significant issues, and many of these issues dealt specifically with the women of the church. Paul describes many of these women as living in wanton pleasure, spiritually dead but physically alive. They were idle, engaging in gossip, meddling in the affairs of others, and speaking about things that were inappropriate and improper. Some had broken their pledges to the Lord God and brought upon themselves severe condemnation. Others had turned away from the Lord God altogether and had strayed after Satan. Many of these unruly women were contaminating the church with their indecent behavior, impurity, and immorality. These women were a great distraction to others in the worship service. Under the pretense of worshiping the Lord God, these women were flaunting themselves and distracting others from the true worship of God.

Paul begins by first addressing their adornment.

1 Timothy 2:9 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,

The term adorn comes from the Greek word, *kosmeo*, from which we get the English word cosmetics. It means to arrange or to put in order, referring specifically to how a woman presents or prepares herself, particularly in terms of her external appearance. However, in the context of the local church, a woman's adornment is not merely about outward beauty, but should reflect an attitude of respectable apparel. What is an attitude of respectable apparel? Scripture answers this with two key attitudes: modesty and self-control. These qualities should shape not only what a woman wears, but how she carries herself, pointing to a deeper, well-ordered heart or mindset that reflects reverence and dignity in the worship service. The Greek word for modesty refers to a sense of shame or honor. The King James Version translates this word as "shamefacedness." It can also be translated as bashfulness, reverence, having a high regard for others, and respectfulness. The word is a blend of humility and modesty, and indicates a sense of reverence that is appropriate for a specific person or situation. The Greek word translated self-control refers to soundness of mind, moderation, or sobriety. It conveys the idea of moral balance and restraint, avoiding extremes of behavior.

In this context, it refers to a woman's modesty, dignity, humility, and godly demeanor, especially in contrast to ostentatious dress or behavior of the world. A woman who embraces modesty and self-control reflects a heart that is reverent and honoring to the Lord God, and one that is sensitive to the spiritual well-being of others. A woman who embraces modesty and self-control would feel the weight of distracting someone from worshipping the Lord God, or provoking someone to lustful thoughts, and out of love for the Lord God and her neighbor, she would seek to avoid anything that might cause a fellow believer to stumble into temptation. A woman who embraces modesty and self-control takes to heart the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Matthew.

Matthew 18:6-7 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!

A woman whose adornment is proper, marked by the attitudes of modesty and self-control, will not dress in a way that is deliberately suggestive or seductive. She will avoid anything in her appearance that might serve as a distraction or a temptation, and she will be mindful not to act in a way that could cause a brother or sister in Christ to stumble into sin.

Paul now moves to the specifics of this principle. He lays out clearly what is improper for a woman's adornment.

1 Timothy 2:9 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,

What is wrong with braided hair? What is wrong with gold, pearls, and costly attire? Does this mean that as a woman I should never braid my hair, or wear gold jewelry, or pearls, or fancy clothes? James B. Hurley wrote a book called "Man and Woman in Biblical Perspectives." In it, he gives a helpful picture of the culture in Ephesus, in the first century.

The sculpture and literature of the period make it clear that women often wore their hair in enormously elaborate arrangements with braids and curls interwoven or piled high like towers and decorated with gems, gold, and pearls. The courtesans, or the prostitutes, wore their hair in numerous small pendant braids with gold droplets, with pearls and gems every inch or so, making a shimmering screen of their locks.

Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish philosopher, in his work, *The Sacrifices of Cain and Abel*, described prostitutes or the morally lax as, "wearing many gold chains and bracelets, with their hair styled in elaborate and gaudy braids. Their eyes were marked with heavy lines of kohl or pencil, and their eyebrows were painted or darkened. They wore expensive, lavishly embroidered clothing adorned with flowers." Other historical sources, relevant to this passage, spoke of women in the Roman Empire who frequently drew attention to themselves by wearing expensive and ostentatious garments. Many at this time, criticized the extravagant display of wealth through dress and adornment, as many garments could cost thousands of denarii. This was a tremendous sum of money given that one denarius equaled the daily wage of a laborer or soldier. Even the clothing worn by an average woman might cost between 500 and 1,000 denarii.

This helps us understand Paul's admonition for modesty and self-control, as such displays could promote pride, distract others from worship, and cause others to stumble. Imagine the distraction this could cause within the gathered assembly of believers. A poor farmer enters the congregation. He yearly wage is about 250 denarii a year. His crops have been lean for several seasons, and he is burdened with taxes and unpaid wages for his workers. Financially, he is barely holding on. On Sunday morning, he comes to worship the Lord God and to join with fellow believers in prayer, singing hymns, reading Scripture, and receiving the preached Word of God. As the service begins, a woman enters, her hair is extravagantly styled, she is adorned with gold and jewels, wearing a dress worth more than five years the farmer's income. But not only is her appearance grand and ornate, it is very revealing. She is an attractive woman. She inevitably draws attention to herself, creating a serious distraction in what

should be a time of Christ-centered worship and meditation. In Ephesus, a woman who adorned herself in elaborately braided hair, gold, pearls, and costly garments was an enormous distraction because she looked like a prostitute.

In the church, women are to be modest and discreet, not bold and brash, appearing like worldly women, who flaunt their wealth and sexuality. A woman who comes to church adorned in this way not only draws attention away from the worship of the Lord God but also causes others to stumble.

While the specifics of braided hair, jewelry, and expensive clothes may not necessarily apply to us today, this passage establishes a universal principle. At best, improper adornment is a distraction for the men and women who are there to worship the Lord God, and at worst, it is a temptation that could lead others to morally stumble and fall into sin. Richard Baxter, a Puritan pastor who lived in the 17th century, recognized this struggle. He gave this counsel to the women in his congregation:

You must walk among sinful persons as you would do with a candle among straw or gunpowder.

In other words, as a woman, you are like a vessel of fire that lives among a world of tinder. Your adornment, the way you dress, the way you carry yourself, it can either help your brothers and sisters in Christ with their moral purity, or it can put temptation in their path, and inflame them to burn with passion.

Romans 14:13-19 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. 15 For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up-building.

You must strive to edify, encourage, and build up your brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. You must pursue that which fosters peace and mutual up-building, rather than tearing others down and being a stumbling block through your adornment and physical appearance.

Everyone has different standards, preferences, and opinions on fashion and dress, so how can a woman discern the fine line between what is proper dress and what is improper dress? The answer to this question lies with the intent of your heart. Examine your reasoning and examine your motives. Why are you dressing the way you are dressing? Is your purpose to show your devotion and love for the Lord God? Is your intent to show your love and submission to your husband? Is it to show your obedience and submission to your parents? Does your adornment reveal a humble heart that loves the Lord Jesus Christ? Does it reveal a humble heart that loves others? Does it demonstrate an attitude that puts other people, their preferences, and their good before yourself? Or, is your adornment to call attention to yourself? Is your intent to flaunt your beauty or your wealth? Is your purpose to feel better about yourself by getting attention from others? Or worse, is your intent to lead others astray?

You who claim godliness, you who profess godliness, should support your claim not only by

your attitude of modesty and self-control, but also by your adornment of good works. John Stott remarked,

Women need to remember that if nature has made them plain, grace can make them beautiful, and if nature has made them beautiful, good deeds can add to their beauty.

1 Peter 3:3-5 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing— 4 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. 5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their husbands.

The way to become more attractive is not by physical fitness. It is not by the latest fashions, or by your hair and makeup, or by surgery, rather, it is through godliness. A woman is made beautiful by what she does, not by what she wears or what she looks like. So the older you get, the more attractive you can become. True beauty comes from the inside.

Young women, you especially need to know this truth. You must accept this truth because the world will teach you the exact opposite. The world has set a false standard of beauty that no woman can ever attain. External, physical beauty is fleeting, and even if it could be achieved, it can never be sustained. When you look in the mirror and gauge your beauty, look for the imperishable quality of the gentle and kind quiet spirit. Look to modesty and self-control. Look for good works, which are not only pleasing to the Lord God, but are also the genuine proof of your salvation.

Young men, a woman who is beautiful in the eyes of our Father God, ought to be beautiful in the eyes of the sons of God. In looking for a spouse, do not focus solely on the external, because the external is fleeting and fading. Good works, modesty, and self-control are what you should be looking for in a woman. These are the characteristics that make a woman beautiful.

So, in the church, in the local assembly, gathered together: Men, you must lift up holy hands, without wrath, without dissension, and pray for all people. Women, you must clothe yourselves with proper adornment, with the attitudes of modesty, self-control, and by the means of good works.