



Gender Roles in the Church-Part 1

1 Timothy 2:8-15

I. Introduction & Background:

- A. So here we are in a study of 1 Timothy called "Life in the Church" & here's what we've seen thus far:
 1. Paul has clearly laid out Timothy's purpose to stay in Ephesus (to refute false teaching & to teach the truth of Jesus Christ, as the Savior for sinners).
 2. Then we saw last week that the church is to join in God's mission by praying & proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God & man.
 - B. Now, as we turn to 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Paul is going to instruct us on order in the church & about leadership in the church. So let's dive in: Let's read 1 Timothy 2:8-15 & then pray together.
 1. These are some of the most controversial words in the Pastoral Epistles.
 2. Furthermore, it's passages like this, that we must not allow emotions, presuppositions or culture be our guides. We must allow God's word guide us.
 3. And because the issue of gender roles is such a difficult & hot subject, we're going to take 2 weeks to talk about this. So today will be part 1 & then next Sunday will be part 2.
 4. For today I just want to do a few things: 1) Define gender roles in the church, 2) Determine the 'why' of the gender roles in the church, 3) take a few things home with us.
 - C. Now let me say at the outset that this text has been improperly & oppressively used to deny women legitimate ministries. So we must handle this text with great care, because as we will see, each gender is to play an important role in the life of the church.
 - D. Now the reason why Paul wrote to Timothy about this was because of the gender confusion & cultural instability in Ephesus.
 1. The Temple of Diana was in its backdrop & that influenced much of its culture. Diana was celebrated in Ephesus as the goddess of fertility & there were temple prostitutes, temple prophets/prophetesses & it was a party atmosphere. Eunuch priests, who were under the authority & influence of the false goddess, led worship at the Temple. One commentator described Ephesus as 'a bastion of feminine supremacy'.
 2. It was a town with a large mix of Jews & Greeks, who did not get along very well. The town was ready to protect the Temple at all costs & it was created some instability. We know from Acts 19, that when the gospel of Jesus came to the town through Paul in the late 50's, that a riot took place because it was cutting into the profits of the silversmiths.
 3. This brief flyover the town shows us: sexual confusion, gender confusion & a strained town.
 4. So when the church in Ephesus started, you can imagine the type of people who are responding to the gospel: prostitutes, eunuch priests, rich men who benefitted from the Temple, Jews & Greeks who hated each other.
 - E. But this conversation is really needed in our own world, as well. Gender confusion is happening all around us. From homosexual marriage, to cross-dressing, to immorality of every kind. The church not only should have answers for these kinds of things, it should be a 'bastion for God's created order'.
 - F. And that's what Paul is doing here. He's targeting some particular issues in the town of Ephesus that had drifted into the church in Ephesus. So for Paul & Timothy, who was leading this church, it was important to set the church in order with regards to leadership & how the church should be governed.
- II. A Universal Answer to a Cultural Problem. So to answer the gender confusion Paul takes time here to discuss what the gender roles should look like in the church.



- A. There are several things that are intriguing about this text, but one of them is this: if gender roles were not important, then God would've left it alone. But he didn't. He gives some instruction about each gender, with regards to the life in the church. And in so doing, he's showing us that gender roles matter. Unlike some would think in our world, gender matters to God & it should matter to us.
 - B. Knowing that Paul is dealing with some very specific issues in Ephesus helps us as we look at this text. Because it doesn't take a rocket scientist to notice that Paul spends more time on discussing what women are to do & not do, than he does on men. There's 1 verse for men (vs. 8) & 4 verses for women (9-12) or 5 if you included vs. 15 (which is a strange one). And this is where we cannot forget the influence of the Temple Diana on the church in Ephesus & neglect to see what was happening in the church. For instance:
 - 1. There were a lot of Temple worship practices that the new converts were trying to bring into the church & Paul is trying to redirect their thinking to God's order in Christ.
 - 2. Paul was not picking on the ladies here. Paul was dealing with a cultural problem in Ephesus, by giving us a universal answer! This is why Paul in vs. 8, says, "in every place" & then "likewise" in vs. 9. These instructions are for every place the church gathers, so that would include us.
 - C. So at the outset of this here's what we must notice: Paul is answering a cultural issue with a universal answer. And the universal answer is this (it's not politically correct, nor is it easy to take, especially in a world, like Ephesus that was a 'bastion for feminine supremacy'): the biblical norm that we should affirm is a woman's 'submission' to male 'authority'. Now, before we leap off a cliff here, I'm going to define what this means, but for now, this is basically Paul's universal answer. The church & family run better, people are happier & more fulfilled, when we believe, affirm & live by a woman's 'submission' to male 'authority'.
- III. So let's take up these instructions to understand them. Now, I'm going to go after some of the most difficult/controversial issues in the text, because I know that's where your minds are probably going.
- A. This means that were not going to spend much time on the fact that Paul calls men to lead the charge in public prayer without fighting/quarreling with one another. I don't think there's much debate over that issue & knowing that Jews/Greeks were in the same church together, it seems pretty reasonable that Paul should call them to pray together in unity, rather than fight.
 - B. And it means we won't spend a great deal of time on the fact that women should dress modestly. Knowing that the temple prostitutes roamed the town & knowing that many of the women in the church were used to dressing & acting like prostitutes, helps us understand why Paul put a premium on modesty. So the talk of braided hair & the like, isn't a command to stop braiding your hair, as much as it is a command to not dress like women who were selling themselves. Modesty may vary from culture to culture, but a Christian woman is to adorn herself with good works in every culture.
 - C. But what I want to spend our time on is those dynamite verses of 11-12. These verses have to do with authority in the church. Here's why I say that:
 - 1. With the backdrop of the Temple & its influence in the church, Paul is answering the question: what role do men & women play in the church & how are the genders to function in the order that God created? Now, next week, we're going to look at the gender issue from creation, how sin distorted it & what Jesus does to restore it. But that's next week. Right now, we're just looking at what Paul is teaching in 1 Timothy 2. And he's answering a major problem in Ephesus: what role do men & women play in the church? And Paul is establishing who leads it.
 - 2. But you can also notice that these verses are about authority because of the use of the words: submission & authority. Paul is very clearly here speaking about who leads & who follows.



3. Finally, I say these verses are about authority because of where he goes in the next chapter. Chapter 3:1-12 are about the leadership in the church, in the roles of elders & deacons. So Paul is setting the stage in chapter 2, for what he's about to say in chapter 3.
- D. So with this authority understanding in mind, let's take up vs. 11-12 & deal with them.
 1. Women are to learn quietly with all submission.
 - a. Knowing the chaos that was happening in their church services, it makes sense for Paul to instruct this. And you'll notice that he uses the word 'quiet' in vs. 12 as well. It was also known in the church that women would loudly disrupt the church services by asking their husband questions, by loudly disagreeing with the teacher or by declaring loud prophecies with no order or benefit to the church gathered. Again, with the fact that Ephesus was a "bastion for feminine supremacy", this would need to be discussed. That's why Paul says women must learn quietly & in submission.
 - b. Now to understand this word, 'quiet' we've got to see that Paul also uses it in 2:2, where we're to live "peaceful & quiet lives". This does not mean absolute silence. Rather it's a quietness of contentment, being at peace & living within the God-given place that God has created for you.
 - c. So we have to ask, what sort of quietness is Paul talking about? Let me show you this from another vs. in the Bible: 1 Peter 3:4 (imperishable qualities of a gentle & quiet spirit). And notice the joy that this brings to God, "in God's sight is very precious".
 - 1) The idea of a quiet spirit is a person that is not completely silent or doesn't talk. Rather, it's a settled disposition of one's role, place & value.
 - 2) A person who is quiet is neither trying to take ground for their own benefit, nor are they giving ground in fake compliance. Rather, they are humbly holding their seat.
 - 3) So when Paul says learn quietly, he's saying that a woman, who understands God's created order & is content in it, does not try to undermine God's order & the authority that he has placed her under. As John Piper has preached, "Quietness means not speaking in a way that compromises that authority."
 - d. This means that a woman could be opinionated, yet be quiet. It also means a woman could be silent & not be quiet. This quietness has more to do with attitude of heart than it does the lips. The heart will rule the lips. So a woman is to learn quietly in all submissiveness.
 2. Women are not to teach or exercise authority over a man. This is perhaps the most charged portion of the text. So we've got to explore this a tad bit.
 - a. First, I want you to notice in other places in the Bible, women are encouraged to teach.
 - 1) Titus 2:3, they are to teach what is good to the younger women.
 - 2) 2 Timothy 3:14 shows us that young Timothy was taught the scriptures from an early age. Knowing that his dad was not a Christian, but his mom, Eunice & grandmother, Lois, were, shows us that women taught Timothy when he was young.
 - 3) Or what about Acts 18:26 where Apollos is taught by "Priscilla & Aquilla the way of God more accurately." Priscilla was no doubt a marvelous theologian & she was used by God to help equip, very possibly one of the most gifted preachers in the 1st century.
 - 4) So it's very obvious that women are to teach & to be quite honest, in some situations, there are women who are better teachers than men.
 - b. So what is Paul talking about here? Well, this is where authority is important. Because Paul ties this type of teaching with authority. Notice he says, 'teach or exercise authority over a man.' So Paul is talking here about forbidding women from teaching when it is a part of exercising authority over men.



- 1) This is why connecting this section to Paul's instructions on elders is very important. Because elders have basically 2 roles: oversee the church & teach.
 - a) You'll notice in 1 Timothy 3:2 that an elder must be able to teach.
 - b) In 1 Timothy 5:17 it emphasizes elders who preach & teach.
 - c) And in Acts 20:28 the elders in Ephesus were to care for the flock that God gave them.
 - 2) So on one level this teaching is connected with the role of elder. Paul's basic statement is this: I do not permit a woman to teach with authority & serve as an elder. Now, we'll cover this more in a couple of weeks as study 1 Timothy 3, but it's quite clear that the role of an elder is gender-exclusive to men because Paul says that an elder must "be the husband of one wife", revealing that this role is reserved for men.
 - 3) These would include the type of teachers listed in Acts 13:1 & Ephesians 4:11. These types of teachers are gifts to the church, exercising their God-given authority & they are roles reserved for men.
 - 4) However, it must be stated very clearly, that women can, should & do teach. But their teaching is in non-authoritative roles, yet with spirit-empowered gifts. I want to use Priscilla as an example. Marvelous theologian from all that we can tell who served Apollos very well. But notice, her husband is listed with her. The authority was on scene while they both instructed Apollos.
 - c. Now, as we'll talk about in 2 weeks with elders, this leadership, is to be caring, service-oriented & loving. In Christ's church, leadership that is dictatorial, manipulative, or coercive is ungodly & there's no room for it. These verses are not a license for squelch women, their gifts or deny them opportunity to serve Jesus. Rather, they are to free them to serve, with joy, in their God-given capacity to the fullest measure.
 - E. So, leadership positions (primarily, elders) are reserved for men in the church. We can only imagine the turmoil that young Timothy was dealing with here, but nonetheless, this is a universal answer to a cultural problem. It's to go in every church, wherever the church is to meet.
- IV. But why? Why are we to do it is this way? The 'why' of the gender roles in the church. Well, vs. 13 shows us this: God created Adam first, then Eve. What Paul does is he refers back to the created order. And what this does is take the pressure off of all of us: the pastor, church-goer or apostle & says, 'well, this is the way God set it up.' Now there's a couple of things to notice about this answer:
- A. First, gender roles were in operation before the fall into sin. We're going to talk more about this next week, but please notice this. Adam was created first, then Eve. Some say when sin entered the world is when God made up the roles, but that's not true. The roles were defined in God's mind, pre-fall.
 - B. Second, this is God's order & thus how God desires his church to be ordered. Sin has distorted the roles & how we function in them in our society. But with the redemption & restoration that Christ has brought, the roles are placed back into God's order.
 - C. So why is it that women are not to teach & exercise authority over men? Because Adam was created first, then Eve. Why is it that men are to take the primary leadership in the local church? Because Adam was created first, then Eve.
 - D. Next week, we're going to deal with this & start with vs. 13, to look back on creation, the fall & what Christ has restored. Don't worry, we're going to cover some tough ground there. But for right now, I just want you to take this away: God intends for the order in his church to mirror the order at creation.
- V. Take home thoughts:
- A. Let grace, mercy & peace lead this discussion.



1. We've got to keep the gateway of this book in the forefront of our thinking. 1:2 shows us that grace, mercy & peace are 3 words that every Christian can relate to & they are the foundational words of the church.
2. And because grace, mercy & peace have been given to us in Jesus, we've got to extend that to others when having this discussion. Love must win the day as we delicately model & talk about gender roles in the church.
- B. Don't equate role with status or value.
 1. Because God has called all of us to different roles, does not change our status with God as his children. Ladies, you are just as much an "heir of God's grace" as your husband is. Church-goer, you are just as much a recipient of forgiveness as an elder is. Our roles may differ, but our value does not.
 2. All created in the image of God. All Christians have been given grace, mercy & peace. We all have equal status with God, even though we all have different roles. Don't equate role with status or value.
- C. God intends for every person, male & female, to be involved in his mission. Just in different roles.
 1. We cannot get into the syndrome that says, "well, I'm a woman, & I don't have a place to serve." Or "I'm a church-goer & God only wants elders doing his work." That in my opinion is ungodly, unbiblical & I would go so far as to say it's demonic.
 2. Rather, we've got to continue to see that God intends for every person, male & female, to be involved in his mission. Just with different roles.
 3. I think it's helpful here to hear John Piper's definitions for authority & submission:
 - a. "Authority" refers to the divine calling of spiritual, gifted men to take primary responsibility as elders for Christ-like servant-leadership and teaching in the church.
 - b. "Submission" refers to the divine calling of the rest of the church, both men and women, to honor and affirm the leadership of the elders and ***to be equipped by it for the hundreds and hundreds of various ministries available to men and women in the service of Christ.***
 4. We simply cannot miss this: hundreds & hundreds of various ministries! Friends, you are ministers of the one true God. God intends for all of us to be mobilized into his service & mission.

VII. General Thoughts & Observations:

A. Saved through childbearing:

1. Just as hard labor is the man's salvation in a set of circumstances and surroundings that without it, would cause him to deteriorate instead of make progress in character, so the pains of childbirth become the salvation of the woman, and in the same sense and for the same purpose, that of enabling the woman to adjust herself in her circumstances and surroundings so that she too will do the same.¹

B. 'the New Testament reveals ... a wide-ranging concept of "order" (*taxis*) which God has designed for human society at many levels', and which demands 'submission' (*hypotagē*), including that of a wife to her husband in marriage. 'To submit is to recognise your place within the God-given order of society, and to act appropriately to that place, by accepting the authority of those to whom God has entrusted it.'²

C. His argument for masculine 'headship' from the priority of Adam's creation is perfectly reasonable when seen in the light of primogeniture, the legal rights and privileges accorded to the firstborn.³

D. 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.⁴

E. A very interesting thought on vs. 15: saved through the birth of the child, indicating that while she might have a different role, based on the created order, she is no less valuable in the eyes of God. Since we're all saved through the birth of Jesus, via Mary, we're all saved through a woman.

1. According to Greek mythology, Artemis was birthed without any pain to her mother Leto.

¹ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader* (1 Ti 2:13). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

² Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: The message of 1 Timothy & Titus*. The Bible Speaks Today (77). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

³ Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: The message of 1 Timothy & Titus*. The Bible Speaks Today (79–80). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴ Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: The message of 1 Timothy & Titus*. The Bible Speaks Today (84). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.