

## **First Timothy: The Household of God**

What About Women, Paul?

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### **WHAT ABOUT WOMEN, PAUL? 1 Timothy 2:8-15**

If you have the Word of the one we have surrendered to, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to 1 Timothy 2. In the midst of a lot of things going on over the last few weeks, I have been preparing for Secret Church, and because of the whole simulcast element of that, I have to turn in my outline a couple of months early in order to get all of the books printed and shipped on time, which...as a side note...simulcast registration is now open for Secret Church. I know some of you were not able to get reservations for that event here, even though some of you were right online at 9:00. Like trying to get...people have been asking me, "How do you do it? What's the secret to getting tickets for that?" I tell people that God is sovereign, and your Internet connection speed is responsible. So, there you go. That's the best I've got.

In all seriousness, if you would like to do Secret Church as a small group in your home or wherever, then you can start sign-up for that now. If I wasn't teaching Secret Church, that's the way I would want to do it. It gives, I think, an even better feel of how many of our brothers and sisters around the world gather together in homes late at night to worship and dive into the Word.

Anyway, the topic for the Secret Church...and it's coming November 4th...the topic is Marriage, Family, Sex and the Gospel. I'm all the more convinced, after the last few weeks, especially, that this issue is huge. That it's huge in our culture, and it's huge in the world, and huge in the church. My friend and fellow pastor, Mark Dever, said,

"The most important revolution in the past century has been the sexual revolution. Contraception replaced conception, pleasure was separated from responsibility. It was as if a license was given out legitimizing the bending of every part of our lives around serving ourselves. Since that time divorce, remarriage, abortion, premarital sex and extramarital sex, as well as homosexuality have been accepted by increasing percentages of the public. Pornography is huge business and this is not just a problem with the society out there. Many churches have found their members plagued by failed marriages and illicit affairs, by so-called private sins that turn into public disgraces. Some of which are known, some of which are not yet known."

We live in a culture and in a world, and sadly, amidst a church that is marked by rampant sexual immorality, skyrocketing divorce, degradation of marriage, confusion of gender, epitomized in recent debates in the political sphere about same-sex marriage, but this issue is so much more than just politics. John Piper said "Confusion over the meaning of manhood and womanhood today is epidemic, and the consequence of this confusion is not a free and happy harmony among gender-free persons. The consequence, rather, is more divorce, more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more promiscuity, more social awkwardness, more emotional distress and suicide that come with the loss of God-given identity."

The reality is that this issue, the issue of manhood and womanhood...what it means to be male and female and relate to one another in marriage and family as male and female...this issue strikes at the core, not just of who we are, but also at the core of who God is, and at the core of how God saves us. This issue is big, which makes a passage like 1 Timothy 2:8-15 sound laughable to the world, when it is critical to the church. So, I want us to read this text that some would say is a bit controversial, and I want us to consider what it means together.

So, 1 Timothy 2:8. Paul says these words to Timothy, to the church at Ephesus, and by extension, to us.

*"I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 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. Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control."*

Let's pray. Oh God, we confess our need for your grace tonight, in this room, at this moment, to understand your Word rightly. We want to understand your Word rightly, and I want to communicate your Word accurately. We, in our day, are prone to read a passage like this and think that the Bible is out of date or irrelevant. Some professing Christians have even said your Word is inaccurate, but we confess, in this room tonight, that the problem is not that your Word is out of date, but our culture is out of line; our lives are out of line. So, we come to your Word tonight with submissive hearts and submissive minds. We want you to teach us your Word. By your Spirit, we want you to teach us your ways, for we believe, and we know that all your ways are good, and your Word is always right and always good. So, we pray for your leadership by your Spirit in our hearts and minds through your Word tonight. We pray with great anticipation for what you will teach us, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Okay, so a bit of a tough text. What we need to realize from the very beginning is that 1 Timothy 2:8-15 doesn't just appear out of nowhere. It doesn't stand alone. I mean that in a couple of different ways. In one sense, it doesn't stand alone in the book of 1 Timothy. It is tied to what comes before and what comes after this. So, last week, we saw God's desire for the salvation of all peoples. God's worth...He is worthy of the worship of all peoples. We saw last week that Christ died to rescue and ransom all peoples, and we saw how that drives us to pray for all kinds of people. We saw last week who we need to pray for; we saw what we need to pray for. Then, when we get to verse 8, Paul says "*I desire then...*" So, in light of that, he begins talking about, "Okay, we've seen who we need to pray for, what we need to pray for. Now, who we need to be as we're praying." That's what this passage is about: who we need to be as men and women who are praying for the glory of God among all peoples.

Then, it's tied to what comes after this. We won't look at 1 Timothy 3 in depth until next week, but just to give you a heads-up. What happens after this is Paul talks about the qualifications for overseers, for elders and pastors. Remember, those three terms are interchangeable in the New Testament...pastor, elder, overseer. So, he talks about elders and their responsibilities...qualifications for elders and responsibilities of elders...right after this. We'll talk about, in a minute, why that is significant.

So, we need to realize this paragraph here doesn't just appear by itself. It is tied to what comes before it, and it's leading to something after. We also need to realize that this passage does not stand alone when it comes to history. This didn't just come out of nowhere at no certain time. This involves words that were written from Paul in the first century to Timothy pastoring the church at Ephesus. So, there is a specific people, a specific context, a specific culture, a specific time into which these words were spoken. So, we need to think through...now, that doesn't mean that this just applies to them, because the reality is that we know this is God's Word, and it applies to all people of all times, but in order to understand how God's Word applies to all people of all times, we've got to put ourselves in the shoes of the people who were first hearing these words and hear these words from their perspective. So, that's the challenge when it comes to Bible study.

You can tell that there are some background things that are going on here at Ephesus that are important for us to understand. Even just a cursory reading of this passage, it's clear that there are either men who aren't praying, or men who are praying and arguing with each other. It's clear from this passage that there are at least some women who are wearing some shady things to church. So, we're getting some clues here. We want to dive into those clues to try and understand what's going on.

## **To Divisive Men in the Church**

### **Pray with purity before God.**

Look at what Paul is saying, first, to divisive men in the church. He is saying to them, "Pray in every place." When he says "every place" it's most likely a reference to the different houses that the church in Ephesus would meet in. He says in all these places, "Pray with purity before God...lift holy hands in prayer."

So, there's posture and purity there. Lift holy hands...the picture is not just lift hands, but be holy as you come before God. It reminds us of the Old Testament picture. Psalm 24: "*Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?*" He who has what kind of hands? Clean hands, and—what kind of heart?—a pure heart. Psalm 26: the psalmist says, "*I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, Oh Lord.*" You go to the temple mount in the Old Testament day...you go to the temple mount and there would be basins of water all around the temple mount where people would go, and as they were preparing to pray, they would wash their hands. A picture of their need for cleansing, not just on the outside, but on the inside, at the core of who they are. This makes sense. Purity is essential to prayer. It makes no sense to come before a holy God in prayer while holding on deliberately to sin in our lives.

### **Pray with peace before others.**

Lift holy hands. Pray with purity before God, and second, pray with peace before others, "*without anger or quarreling*", the text says. What we're seeing in 1 Timothy, and we'll see even more in the weeks to come, is that there were all kinds of disputes and arguments that were going on in Ephesus during first century...in the Ephesian church during the first century. All kinds of false teachers, provoking these kind of disputes, anger, quarreling with one another. Paul says, "Don't pray before God when you've got conflict with all your brothers around you." It's the same thing that Jesus said in Matthew 5, "*When you're offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,*" what do you do? "*Leave your gift there at the altar, first go and be reconciled to your*

*brother, then come and offer your gift.*" Paul is saying the same thing. Prayer before God is artificial if there's not peace with others.

Okay, we're not in first century Ephesus, but this text is already begging questions of you and me 2,000 years later in this room. I would say, to both men and women, although obviously, the exhortation here is particularly to men, but I would ask all of us in this room: As we gather together for worship tonight, is there any deliberate sin in your life that you are holding onto? I would ask you to resist the temptation, at this moment, to think about what others might be thinking of and to seriously examine your soul...your heart. Is there sin that you are holding onto, that you are clinging to, that you are persistently giving into, or that you are prone to giving into, that you are holding onto in your heart? If so, then I want to urge you, before we go any further in our worship tonight, to ask God by His grace, by the grace of Christ, to cleanse your heart. This is why we're prioritizing confession in our worship...why it's essential...because we are so prone to presume upon the grace of God. We enter...and it's not just in our day. It's been God's people throughout history, gathering together and coming before Him in worship and not being honest with Him about sin in our lives. Let's not fall prey to that temptation and to miss the whole point of worship and prayer in the process.

Then, I would ask the follow-up question: Are you harboring anger or bitterness toward a brother or sister in your life right now? Is there conflict, anger, bitterness between you and a brother or sister? If there is, I want to encourage you, as soon...let the first thing you do tonight after we finish our worship gathering...if not sooner...let it be that you go be made right with your brother or sister. Do not delay. Do not let this continue. Don't presume to worship when there is conflict and division that needs to be reconciled with a brother or sister. This is important!

## **To Distractive Women in the Church**

### **Adorn yourself with modest dress.**

Worship and pray with purity before God and with peace with others. That's what Paul says to divisive men in the church. Then, he moves on to distractive women in the church. Verse 9, *"likewise also"*, okay? So, women, he says, "Adorn yourself with modest dress." *"Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire..."* Now, what's that about? Do we need to start looking around in this room tonight for who's got braids in their hair? Do we need to post people at the entrance on Sundays from here on out to check people out, "Okay, you have a sinful hairdo. If you could just turn around and get that fixed, then we'll let you in." Should we stop anyone wearing gold earrings, pearls, gold necklaces...anything along those lines? Saying, "All right, here's a bucket. Just put it in the bucket as you come in; part of our new global giving program at Brook Hills." Now, those people take "The Radical Experiment" way too far.

So, is that what this text is teaching us? This is where we, again, need to step into the culture into which Paul is speaking. A culture that is, in many ways, parallel to our own. Ephesus was a city, like many of the cities, into which Christianity was born in the first century. Ephesus was a city filled with sexual immorality. You have the temple to Artemis, a Greek goddess, and every night, cult prostitutes would come out from that temple wearing ornate things in an attempt to seduce men, to draw attention to themselves, and Paul says, "Not so with the church." Do not dress in a way that draws attention to physical beauty, to yourself.

Immodest. The word for “modesty” here has sexual overtones. He is saying be respectful, modest, self-controlled in your dress. This is so big! We may not have a temple of Artemis in our community, but we are extremely loose in our culture when it comes to what women wear. Skin-tight clothes, low necklines, short dresses, short skirts, short shorts. All of which fall short of the biblical idea of modesty and self-control on a general level, and then, particularly, when it comes to the gathering of the church.

The Bible says to many women in our day...and with all due respect to many sisters in this room...that the way you are dressing is, at best, a distraction from honoring God and at worst, is an attempt to draw men to look at you and fall into sin. Sisters, when you are deciding what you are going to wear, particularly when it comes to the gathering of the church, what is the question you are asking? Are you asking, “What makes me look the best? What makes me look most attractive? What will draw eyes to me?” Or are you asking “What can I wear that can best express a humble heart that wants nothing but the worship of God?” How you answer those questions will change what you wear.

Along those lines: do not draw attention to worldly wealth. Part of the point of gold and pearls and jewelry here is that these ornate things were highlighting the distinction between the wealthy and poor in the church, and women were using their dress to assert their status. This is of the world! Sisters in this faith family, do not adorn yourself with that which draws attention to you, particularly, when you gather together with the church for worship, remember the one who you are competing with for attention: God Himself. You want your worship and your life, in every way, to draw attention to God, not you. That’s the point.

#### **Adore God through a Christlike demeanor.**

Adorn yourself with modest dress and adore God through a Christlike demeanor. Don’t miss it. Paul is not saying don’t adorn yourself with anything. Paul says adorn yourself with godliness. When you look in the mirror...sisters in this family...when you look in the mirror, look for good works. This is what matters. Look for the fruit of faith in Christ. Adorn yourself with that. Adore God with that. This is how you clothe yourself in a way that draws attention to God.

That’s Matthew 5:16, right? *“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* That’s what we’re after. May God raise up women, sisters across this church who refuse to get up any day, and especially on Sunday, and think, “What can I wear today that can make me look good to the people around me?” We’ve got to raise up women...sisters...across this church who get up every day, including Sunday, thinking humbly, “How can I dress today and what can I do today that will draw the most attention to the glory of my God?” That’s not easy in this culture. That’s totally against the grain, and it is good for women in the church not to distract others from God, but to attract others to God. Dress, live in a way that attracts people to God.

## **On the Distinct Roles of Men and Women in the Church**

So, this is what Paul says to distractive women in the church, and that, then, leads him to talk about...based on that...distinct roles of men and women in the church. Again, likely addressing some specific things that were going on here in Ephesus. This is where we come to probably the most controversial part of this passage, verses 11-15. Starting with, *“let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness”* all the way down to *“she will be saved through child-bearing.”* So, again, let’s step into the shoes of the people who are hearing this.

We know...and I'll give you just a preview as we did not look at these passages...we know from 1 Timothy 4, which we'll see in a few weeks, that some of these false teachers were teaching that women should not be married; that they should not get married. They were undercutting the beauty of marriage and encouraging people not to marry, to neglect marriage. Then, we know from 1 Timothy 5 that some young women were buying into that and instead of getting married, they were spending all their time gossiping in the church.

When you turn over to 2 Timothy, also talking about the church at Ephesus, you realize that, in 2 Timothy 3, that there was a group of women who were giving in to false teaching, undercutting the teaching of elders and living according to all kinds of worldly passions.

So, here's the deal: at Ephesus, you've got at least some problem, likely a significant problem, with women who were undercutting godly doctrine, godly behavior and godly leadership in the church. Now, keep in mind, Paul's not just picking on women here. He just spent all of 1 Timothy 1 railing against men in the church who were teaching false doctrine. So, Paul is addressing a variety of things when we come to this difficult passage in verses 11-15.

### **Two principles...**

Now, before we dive into the specifics of this passage, I want to set the stage in a couple of different ways. First, with two principles that I want us to keep in mind here that are important when we study any passage of Scripture and will be important when we study this passage of Scripture. The first principle is the principle of harmony. Now, follow with me here. We interpret each Scripture in light of all Scripture. Now, follow with me here. We know from 2 Timothy 3 that all Scripture is God-breathed, God-inspired. So, this book that has all kinds of different human authors, written at different times in different places and different contexts by different people, comes together under one divine author. As a result of that, we know that what is said in this part of the Bible will not contradict ultimately, what is said in this part of the Bible, because the God who has authored the Bible does not contradict Himself. Everything He speaks is true. So, when we come to one passage of Scripture, we understand that passage of Scripture in light of the whole of Scripture.

There are tons of examples of how this is important and helpful. You think about...my five-year-old is asking questions about the Trinity, and just be encouraged that, though I am a pastor, I still sweat when those questions start coming. I get fumbled words. So, he's heard us talk about, obviously, there is one God. We pray to God our Father, Deuteronomy 6...one God. Then, we've talked about John 10, how Jesus is God, and so our three-year-old is getting that. So, he's always talking about how Jesus is the same as God. Yes, He is God, and we've talked about how the Holy Spirit is God, Acts 5. So, putting the five-year-old to bed, he says, "How can they all be God? How can Jesus be God, and He was on the earth, but God was also in heaven?" Because we talk about heaven a lot, too, and we get a whole other set of questions. Then, "How can Jesus be a man and be God, but God is a Spirit?"

So, he's asking really good questions. There is mystery here, obviously, but we understand and interpret each of those Scriptures in light of all of them. So, we know there is one God, that He is revealed as Father, as Son, as Spirit...three Persons, one God. Mystery there, no question, but we're putting Scripture together, each Scripture understood in light of all Scripture. Make sense? Kind of.

Okay, so, that's the principle of harmony. It's important for us to remember. The second principle is the principle of history: God has revealed Scriptural truth in the context of specific historical and cultural settings. This is what we've already talked about some today.

First Timothy didn't just appear in the Bible out of nowhere. This was written from Paul to Timothy and the church at Ephesus in the first century.

So, that's a specific historical, cultural context, which means we have to ask a couple of questions. We've got to ask, "What part of the text is cultural expression which changes from culture to culture?" So, you think about what we just read about braided hair or gold or jewelry. We won't even use our context. Let's think about an African tribe. Think about an African tribe where traditional hairstyle involves all this intricate braiding, and it has been that way for years and years and years. This intricate braiding is in no way a sign of wealth. This intricate braiding is in no way seductive, used to draw attention to physical beauty; it is simply a traditional picture of women in...we'll just do the Dinka tribe in Central Africa. So, do we need to go to the Dinka and say, "Hey, you need new hairdos." No. That's a cultural expression. Now, we would say to that tribe, "Okay women, don't act, dress in a way that draws attention to physical beauty, worldly wealth in unhealthy ways." We would give that. That's not just cultural expression.

That is...second part...the second question we would ask is: What part of the text is central revelation that never changes? That's revelation that never changes. Don't draw attention to yourself, away from God in unhealthy ways. That's true for the Dinka in Central Africa; it's true for us here in Birmingham, Alabama, and it was true for the church in Ephesus in the first century. Central revelation that never changes.

So, we've got to ask those kinds of questions. We have to be really careful with this principle because this is where people start irresponsibly throwing all kinds of things out of the Bible. People say, "Well, homosexuality is okay. Now, I know that God says that it is wrong and forbids it in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, but clearly they didn't know then what we know about homosexuality now." So, people start throwing texts like that out of the Bible. This is where I'll address that more in Secret Church. This is where we have to be really, really, really careful not to throw biblical truth out in order to accommodate culture. So, we have to be really responsible with these principles, but we're doing them. We're thinking about harmony and history when we come to the Bible and when we come to this text.

### **Two Reminders...**

So, that's two principles, and two reminders based on that. Two reminders. In May, we walked through Genesis 1, 2 and 3 and looked at portrait of biblical manhood and womanhood from the very beginning of creation. If you were not here for that, some of what we're going to talk about is based on that, and I would encourage you, if you wanted to dive in deeper, go back and listen to that. We talked about biblical manhood and biblical womanhood, and so, we know that what we're reading here in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is not going to contradict what we have already seen established in Scripture from the very beginning about biblical manhood and womanhood. So, here are two reminders from Genesis 1-3:

One, God created men and women with equal dignity. We saw that male and female are equally valuable before God. Neither is superior or inferior. To demean women is to sin against God. To demean men is to sin against God. This passage here has nothing to do with the value of men and women. This passage is about the roles of men and women, which leads us to the second reminder, which is: God created men and women with complementary roles. From the very beginning in Genesis 2, men and women are different, distinct, not in value, but in role. Man was created with a role that complements woman. Woman was created with a role that complements man.

This is by God's design. It's not only by God's design, it reflects God's nature. We've talked about...we were talking about Trinity. The Father and the Son. The Father is fully God, the Son is fully God, both equally God, but the Son is submissive to the Father, and the Father directs the Son, right? The Son doesn't ever complain about, "Oh, I've got to submit to the Father." The Father doesn't ever domineer over the Son. This is loving authority and glad submission in the context of a beautiful relationship. So, this complementary role picture is a very reflection of the nature of God. Different roles...equal value...beautiful harmony, and God has created male and female in that way, and it plays out in the home as husband and wife. Ephesians 5 sheds light on those roles, and then it plays out in the church. 1 Timothy 2:11-15 sheds light on those roles. So, what we're seeing here in 1 Timothy 2, we know, of course, what we've already seen in Genesis 1-3. This is about equal value and complementary roles in the church.

### **Two Prohibitions...**

So, that's two principles, two reminders that bring us to this text and two prohibitions. We'll focus in on verse 12 because this is where the prohibition really comes in. This phrase Paul says, "*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man.*" So, there are prohibitions. I don't permit these two things: A woman to teach or exercise authority over a man. All right, there's a lot here. We're going to talk in just a minute more in depth about how Paul, at other points in the New Testament, encourages women to teach in some settings. Titus 2:3 is one example, where Paul tells older women to teach younger women.

So, we know this is not Paul in 1 Timothy 2...against harmony; understanding what Paul is saying here...we know that Paul is not saying this blanket statement, "Women should never, ever, ever, ever teach. Beth Moore, you are in sin." That's not what the Bible is saying, and not what I'm saying. Beth is a good friend and Bible teacher.

So, Paul is not saying that women should never teach...ever, ever, ever. So, what is he saying? This is where I think it's helpful, even though these are two prohibitions, to understand them in tandem, together. I think it's warranted in the context of 1 Timothy. Go ahead and turn to 1 Timothy 3, the very beginning of it. When Paul begins to talk about elders, overseers, leaders in the church, I want you to listen to the way he talks about them: "*This saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer [a leader, elder, pastor, overseer], he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer [a leader, elder, pastor] must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to [do what?] teach...*"

Now, there are all kinds of qualifications here in 1 Timothy 3, and we'll talk more about those next week for elders. Most of them are elder qualifications, but this is a competency qualification. An elder must be able to teach. That's how an elder leads in the church, by teaching the Word. That's what elders do, that's the way they lead, by teaching the Word of God. That's the only authority the elder has to lead, and you see the same thing again over in 1 Timothy 5. Look at verse 17. When Paul talks about elders there, listen to what he says: "*Let the elders who rule well...*" Do you hear it? Lead, rule, lead well. "*...Be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in...*" In what? "*...preaching and teaching.*" So, the picture here in all of 1 Timothy is pretty clear. Elders do two primary things: they lead and they teach. They teach with the authority to lead. Teaching and leading.

So, when Paul says, "*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority [leadership] over a man,*" he is pointing specifically to the two primary responsibilities of elders. So, at the very least, Paul is prohibiting two things. One, He is saying that women should not teach as elders, pastors or overseers in the church. That is clear. That's clear.

Now, it's important to realize, just as a side note here, that even men who don't have a gift of teaching, or men who may not have all the qualifications here in 1 Timothy 3, should also not be elders in the church, but that's not what Paul is addressing here, and we'll talk more about that next week. What Paul is saying here is that even if a woman has a gift of teaching, that gift is not intended by God to be used in teaching as an elder, pastor, overseer in the church. Instead, Paul says women should listen willingly to the biblical instruction of elders.

When it says they should listen quietly or remain quiet, this is not saying that once a woman steps into the gathering of the church, she should go mute. We know that's not what he's saying because we see in other points in the New Testament, we see women praying, prophesying and some points, when Christians are together...Acts 2, 1 Corinthians 11... So, this text is simply saying that a woman should listen attentively with a teachable spirit to elders...God-ordained leaders in the church...when they are teaching the Word.

At the same time, don't forget, this is what we see all over the New Testament, even in Paul's writings, women should teach in various settings of the church in accord with elder instruction. Meaning that outside of elder leadership, there are all sorts of possibilities, teaching possibilities for women. I've mentioned Titus 2:3, where Paul commands older women to teach younger women. On a personal level, Paul in 2 Timothy 3, tells Timothy, "*Remember those who taught you the word,*" and it's a reference to what he said in 2 Timothy 1:5, who taught Timothy the Word...his mother and his grandmother. So, there is, clearly, at least a picture of women teaching children. However, not just children. You go to Acts 18, and you see Priscilla and Aquila pull Apollos aside and together...Priscilla (wife), Aquila (husband)...together teach the Word to Apollos, correct some of his doctrine.

So, you've got those specific instances, and you've got informal pictures of teaching all over the Word in the very Great Commission that we hold dear, when Jesus says, not just to men, but to all disciples, "*Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and*" doing what? "*Teaching them to obey everything Christ has commanded you.*" You go to Colossians 3:16: "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*" All the church, men and women, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly so that you may teach and admonish one another with the word.*" So, there is a picture here of teaching in informal ways, and some in more intentional formal ways, that is intended by God for women to do.

So, the prohibition here is definitely not as elder, pastor or overseer in the church. I put there in your notes, to teach...women should teach in accord with elder instructions. Something to remind us that a woman who is teaching in the church should not be teaching what is contrary to what the elders of the church are teaching. That applies to men or women, and all who are teaching in the church, but I think it's one of the issues that Paul is addressing here in Ephesus because you've got women who were teaching things that were undercutting what elders were teaching.

So, the first prohibition is that women should not teach as elders, pastors or overseers in the church, and the second one is like it. Women should not lead as elders, pastors or overseers in the church. "*She is not to exercise authority but she is to learn quietly with all submissiveness,*" meaning that women submit gladly to the servant leadership of elders. I emphasize servant leadership because, well, it needs to be emphasized. We'll talk more about it next week, but elders are intended by God to lead by serving. Specifically, to serve the body of Christ with the Word of Christ. An elder is intended to love, care for, nurture, serve the body of Christ by diligently, wisely teaching the Word of Christ. As this happens, Paul says, women, as well as other men who are not elders for that matter, gladly submit to

such servant leadership. Women, do not rebel against the leadership of qualified, Christ-like men in the church.

Now, does that mean that women can never be in any type of leadership position in the church? I don't think that's what Paul is saying here. Much like the situation with teaching, based on the rest of the New Testament, where even Paul says in other places in the New Testament, women should lead in various positions of the church under the authority of elder leadership. In other words, with submission to elders, women are free to lead in a variety of different positions. Women are intended by God to thrive in ministry across the church. You look throughout the New Testament, and you see women prophesying, praying, helping, serving, equipping, teaching, and spreading the gospel. One writer said, "The fields of opportunity are endless for the entire church to be mobilized in ministry, male and female." Nobody is to be at home watching soaps and reruns while the world burns.

God intends to equip and mobilize all the saints under the leadership of a company of qualified men who take primary responsibility for leadership and teaching in the church. Yes! Don't tell Lottie Moon or Amy Carmichael or Elizabeth Elliott or Kay Arthur that women are sidelined in the church. All of these women are women who have embraced exactly what Scripture has just outlined and have thrived for the glory of God through ministry in the church.

Now some might ask, "Okay, apart from elder then, what other positions should a woman, or could a woman, teach in or lead in? What about a small group? What about teaching theology in a class in seminary? What about doing this or that?" There are so many different scenarios and possibilities, each of which I think need to be approached prayerfully and as best as possible, biblically, by elders addressing them case-by-case, situation-by-situation.

### **Two Questions...**

However, I think there are a couple of questions that should guide us as a church and guide our elders when it comes to those possibilities. I think, first, we want to ask, as a woman teaches or leads, is she reflecting God's pattern in Scripture? That's a good question to ask. We see women doing many, many different things in the New Testament, and where we see that happening in healthy ways in the New Testament, we can be encouraged to do the same thing in the contemporary church. You think about Titus 2 when Paul commands older women to teach younger women, so absolutely, we need be doing...women need to be doing that. You see women teaching children, so it's absolutely good for us to foster teaching and leadership roles for women among children, but not, I would just add there, I would say that our children also need to see prominent men leading them and teaching them as well. So, both/and. So, you've got that question: Is she reflecting God's pattern in Scripture?

Then, second, I would ask: As a woman teaches and leads, is she reinforcing God's priorities in the home? Meaning, God has set up similar roles of leadership and submission in the home, which we've talked about. Husbands love and lead your wives through serving them. Wives, submit to the loving leadership of husbands. This is God's design in the home, and we want to be very careful not to undercut God's priorities in the home with the way we lead in the church. We want to display, at every opportunity, especially in our day, we want to display godly, humble, loving, sacrificial leadership of men in the church in a way that models that kind of leadership for men in their homes. We want, in our day, as best as possible, to model glad, willing, godly submission of women in the church in a way that shows...in the way that shows what submission that is good and glad and godly looks like in the home.

I'm not saying...I'm not saying that both these questions solve everything and make everything easy, cut and dry, but I do think they're helpful in thinking through what teaching or leadership roles women might have apart from an elder. We know that Scripture is clear that a woman should not teach as an elder, pastor or overseer...should not lead as elder, pastor, overseer. Scripture is clear on that; we want to be clear where Scripture is clear. Where Scripture is not as clear, we want to be wise where Scripture is clear and applying that to those situations.

### **Two Reasons...**

Two reasons for all of this, Paul says, starting in verse 13: one, because of God's design in creation where He gives authority to man. This is how we know. Remember we talked about earlier, about cultural expression is central to revelation? How do we know this is not just cultural? Because Paul in verse 13 says, "Here's the reason: For Adam was formed first, then Eve." Paul reaches back many, many, many years, all the way back before sin entered the world, into Genesis 1, and he said this was God's design from the very beginning. He created man with leadership responsibility, him being created first, and we talked about this in May, along with many other things, shows that this is God's design, and it's good. What Paul is saying here is this is not just based on human opinion. This is based on divine revelation. It does not change.

So, he points to God's design in creation, and then he also points to Satan's distortion of creation: how man abdicates authority to woman. When Paul says in verse 14 that Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived, he is not saying women shouldn't lead because they are so much more easily duped. That's not what he's saying. Instead, what he's doing is he's pointing back, again, to what we saw in May, to the whole picture of sin entering the world in Genesis 3, remember? It started when Satan subverted the design of God. When he approached Eve instead of Adam, and Adam sat silently by, not leading his wife with love and serving her. He sat idly by while she was tempted. God's design was subverted. So, Paul is pointing back to that and saying, "God's design was good. It's good in the home, and it's good in the church."

So, all of that then leads us to the zinger in 1 Timothy 2:15: "*Yet she will be saved through child-bearing, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control.*" I'm going to simplify this. I'm going to share with you what this means in three simple words. What does this text mean? Three simple words: Only God knows what that text means. That's it.

### **Two things we don't know for sure...**

Here's the deal: two things we don't know for sure. There are all kinds of possible interpretations of this verse. Two stand out, I think, as the closest, most plausible possibilities. One, is 1 Timothy 2:15 talking about salvation through the offspring of Eve? Is that what he's talking about? Basically, the idea here is there is a deliberate reference to how, even though the woman ate the fruit first and sin entered the world through her, the Savior also entered the world through her. There is a promise in Genesis 3:15 that one would come through the offspring of Eve who would trample the devil. So, through her line the Savior would be born...through bearing a child.

John Stott, who I respect deeply, espouses this view. He writes,

"Earlier in this chapter, the one mediator between God and men has been identified as the man Christ Jesus, who of course, became a human being by being born of a woman. Further, in the context of Paul's references to the creation and fall, recalling Genesis 2 and 3, are further reference to the coming redemption through the woman's seed, recalling Genesis 3:15, would

be most apt. The serpent had deceived her; her posterity would defeat him. So then, even if certain roles are not open to women and even if they are tempted to resent their position, they and we must never forget what we all owe to a woman. If Mary had not given birth to the Christ-child, there would have been no salvation for anybody. No greater honor has ever been given to woman than in the calling of Mary to be the mother of the Savior of the world."

Okay, that's one possibility. Another possibility: is 1 Timothy 2:15 talking about the significance of women nurturing children? Now, you think about how these false teachers were undercutting women's role in marriage and women's role in the home and trying to blur the distinction between men and women. Could it be that Paul is taking the one facet that without question nobody can deny that only women can do...bear children. Our culture can do everything it wants to try to minimize the differences between males and females, but one distinction will remain. No guys are giving birth. So, is Paul saying, "God has created women uniquely and their responsibilities are uniquely good in the church, in marriage and in bearing children, all of which should be embraced in faith and love and holiness?"

So, I think both of those are probably the most plausible interpretations. Clearly, this passage is not saying that a woman must bear a child in order to be saved. If Paul believed that, he would not, over in 1 Corinthians 7, encourage some women to stay single. He would say, "Get married and have a kid fast because your eternity depends on it." That's what he would say, but we don't have that in 1 Corinthians 7.

### **Two things we do know for sure...**

So, there are a lot of things we know he is not saying, and some questions about what he is saying. Here are two things we do know for sure: one, women are sanctified as they glorify God in the distinct roles and responsibilities He has entrusted to them. We know that, and here is what I mean by that; that can sound a bit wordy. Just hear this: God has created you as a woman or as a man, and there is significance behind that; there is unique significance behind that. So, sisters in Christ, as you are working out your salvation, you are not working out your salvation as just some generic person. You are working out your salvation as a woman of God, uniquely blessed, uniquely formed, uniquely gifted, given unique opportunity for His glory to be made known through you, in a way that is distinct from His glory being made known through man. Both beautiful, both wonderful, both unique and both extremely significant, and when we minimize what it means to be a man in the image of God and a woman in the image of God, we undercut what it means to work out our salvation, what it means to be sanctified as men and women of God, with distinct giftings and opportunities to glorify His name, to thrive as a woman or a man, and know that women are saved, not through the birth of a child, but through the death of Christ. For that matter, women and men are saved through the death of Christ. Sin has disordered this world that we live in. Satan has distorted God's design for our lives as men, as women. He has distorted God's design for our marriages, our families, the church, the culture, but Christ has come, and He has conquered sin, and He has trampled the devil, and in Him, we can thrive. Jesus died to make us the men and women God created us to be.

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