

Clarifying Roles in God's Church – Part 1

1 Timothy 2:8-15

Introduction: When I was a kid in the early 1980's, I remember a song that I listened to on a record player (or 8 track --- not sure which one, but for sure it was John Denver on the 8 track) that went something like this: *"Look all around you, and what do you see. Two kinds of people they happen to be. They have to be one or the other its true; female or male tell me which one are you. I am a man I might add, I can be a grandpa or dad, a brother or mister, but never a sister, that makes me a man I might add."* It went on to explain that a woman can be a mom, a daughter, or wife, but could not be a man or father. Why is this significant? It shows that I was decently nerdy as a kid, but also how things have changed over the last 40 + years. A friend of mine just told me that she brought her granddaughter to the public library to get some books, and the innocent looking selections pushed agendas on two fronts: in terms of sexuality and equality. One tried to normalize the LGBTQ lifestyle and choice as legitimate, healthy, and leading to happiness, while the other denigrated the joy of a girl becoming a wife and mother by staying silent on the issue all together ("m" is not for mommy, but mechanic). Each of these seems innocent and even healthy - can my daughter be a mechanic if she want? Sure. But when we cut out, change, or rearrange the God given roles that we were created for, it not only falls short of glorifying God, it leads to chaos and despair.

I grew up with a mom who worked hard, both in our home and as a school teacher, who raised two strong women who manage their homes well and are known with favor in their churches and community. God has blessed me with a wife and three daughters who I desire to be strong, confident, and beautiful women. I have hope that they will learn much, be trained to be effective workers in the world and God's church, and contribute much with their skills and gifts. But I also pray that they will get married, become mothers, and manage their households. And whether they get married or not, that they will secure undivided devotion to Christ (1 Cor. 7:35), that they'd be known for their Godly fear, humility, modesty, and strength, and would be demonstrate the love of Christ in their service to God and others. *Why does any of that matter?* We are coming into a section of 1 Timothy that is clear, important, and misunderstood. The issues that arose in the church at Ephesus are nothing new and are still being felt today. It has to do with the **nature of Biblical manhood and womanhood and their perspective roles within the home and the church**. Because mankind has been in rebellion against God and His Word since the Fall, and since we have an arch enemy who will use all at his disposal to confuse and twist God's way, the church has often fallen into the same trap that the world itself has, seeing God's way as being restrictive, demeaning, and thus against us. Our goal is to clarify all of this with compassion, knowing that Scripture can feel dissonant to what we have thought or bought into by false teaching and training.

As we go into the roles of man and woman in the church, its important to keep **three things in mind:**

- **We believe the Bible is our final authority, and submitting ourselves to obedience to it is not simply right, it is for our good** - Submission to the authority of Scripture is not out of slavish duty but in joyful trust, knowing that what God has laid out for us is the best, most beautiful expression of His love for us. The restoration of relationships, between man and God and mankind with mankind, displays the goodness of God, the power and love of Christ, and the unifying work of the Spirit to all. As we approach the role of men and women, we remember that these are NOT cultural constructs that shift from kingdom to kingdom or decade to decade, but is timelessly built into the design of the Creation itself.
- **We believe the Bible teaches men and women "complement" each other** - As a response to the rise of feminism in the 1960's, evangelical churches began to change their views about

God's Biblical design and began to teach something called *egalitarianism*, which says that men and women were **equal** and **interchangeable**. The spiritual headship or leadership of a man was seen as something **fundamentally at odds with true equality** since *value is inextricably tied to function*. To clarify this, the church defined what the Bible teaches as "**complementarian**", where there is intrinsic value in all humanity but also understanding that each man and woman have been given distinct roles or functions of service to Jesus. We believe that when these roles are both expressed, there is **beauty, worship, protection, and effectiveness**. This is NOT a side issue, not an unimportant one, and not one we can be silent or unclear about. In fact, almost every church we interact with is either clarifying this issue or is capitulating to culture on this issue.

- **We believe the gospel radically re-orientates our thinking** - The Fall of mankind brought sin, and the implications of sin have been pervasive. Sin put mankind in rebellion and marred the roles He intended us to play. We've seen and talked about it in marriage, as men **refuse to lead** and either are passive or tyrannical and women desire and will take leadership, especially when leadership is weak. The parallel is seen in the church, where men are called to lead and women to follow, but so often what happens is men refuse to lead and women happily take on the task. The solution to both of these is the **transformation that occurs in the gospel, as men take the mantle of servant leadership and women willingly follow men out of their desire to submit to their Savior**. This type of transformation allows us to be *counter-cultural, to turn our backs on cultural normatives and show something far more beautiful*. But it also means we can hear Scripture through gospel ears and see clearly through gospel eyes. What we talk about these next couple of Sunday's will sound out of step with culture, since it is, and that will either be a good thing to your ears or will create negative reactions in your mind and heart. We will walk through the text as faithfully as we can, and be ready to answer questions that come up, either in future sermons or individually.

Considering the Context

Immediate Context

It's important we are clear with where we've been in 1 Timothy, both to those who have been here and for any visitors. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy not only to remind him of how the church should function (1 Tim. 3:15) and act, but also as a polemic, to correct what had been going on. There had been false teachers at the highest levels of leadership in the church, to the point that Paul had to remove two men, Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:19-20), who were off in both their teaching and conduct. Now Timothy was brought in to finish the job. When we approach this text we must remember that these were real issues, not hypothetical ones. Timothy came to a church that had a strategic value and historic footprint, but had drifted in its commitment and clarity to God's Word.

Also, as we begin verse 8, we remember that two things are in play: **1)** This has to do with *gospel driven prayer*, or prayer that is centered around our mission as a church. We remember that God desires all to come to salvation, so how we live and pray matters. The way that men and women interact is NOT secondary to this, but primary. So often as I've discussed this with other pastors, the thinking is that to be **relevant to the culture** we have to adjust to how IT thinks, including roles of men and women. Here Paul says **the opposite. In order to accomplish our mission, we must be clear about the roles of men and women to play out our mission to the world.** **2)** **Corporate worship** is in mind here. When we discuss the role of men and women, we are talking about the home and church, not the corporate world. Though there can be principles gleaned to inform other areas, the **PRIMARY** place these roles

are discussed is in the corporate gatherings of the church. So when authority, submission, and learning are mentioned, it is in that context, not EVERYTHING or every area.

Textual Arguments

Now, one more consideration before we walk through the text. Those who refuse to take Scripture at face value but will try to twist it or make it say something it does not mean use the following arguments. Let me try to clear up the main ones:

Temporary Issue

Some would argue that what Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:8-15 was only a cultural norm for that time, with Paul addressing something specific to the time of the church of Ephesus alone. If that is true, then all the commands are temporary as well and have no bearing on us today. However, there is nothing in the text before OR after that would signal that Paul was weaving from timeless to temporary and back again, but was giving universal commands to all churches.

*"Paul's injunctions throughout 1 Timothy 2:9-15, then, are not temporary measures in a unique social setting. Ephesus's society and religion ---even the cult of Artemis Ephesia --- shared typical features with many other contemporary Greco-Roman cities. Ephesus was thoroughly Greek in background and character and showed the beginnings of Roman influence. Hence, we have every reason to expect that when Paul restricted women from teaching and exercising rule through special office over a man, he applied it to "every place" (v. 8)."*¹

Preponderance of Biblical Evidence

Far from being a new teaching, the norm in Scripture was male leadership, from priest and prophet in the OT, to priest and pastor in the NT, male leadership was upheld. Men were used by the Holy Spirit to write Scripture, even though women were given high value in books written about them. Some have pointed to certain points throughout Biblical history where women were given certain tasks or abilities as precedence for modern day leadership. However, these examples were nowhere near prescriptive. We see Miriam as a *prophetess* in Exodus 15, though they did not make her a priest but rather her brother Aaron. Huldah was a *prophetess* in 2 Kings 22:14, and though she spoke on behalf of the Lord, but did not hold an official office. Deborah led during the time of the Judges, but that was more an indictment against the male leaders of the time (Judges 4). The daughters of Philip prophesied (Acts 21:9), but what they prophesied is not clear, and Anna (Luke 2:36) was a prophetess in the Temple, and served after her husband died, worshiping, fasting, praying, and speaking to all of the coming redemption of Jerusalem. Phoebe was a servant of the church (Rom. 16:1), Lydia had the church at Philippi gather at her house (Acts 16:14), and Priscilla was skilled in the Scripture enough to instruct her pastor (with her husband) in Acts 18:26. What we see is consistent. Women have had high value, were invaluable to God's Kingdom and His church, but did not hold positional authority.

Creation and Fall

A few months ago we walked through Genesis 1-3, and there was multiple reasons for that study. One of the reasons is that Genesis has become a battle ground for not only Creation vs. evolution, but for roles of men and women. What is taught is that since God created man and woman in His image (Gen. 1:26-28), that man AND woman was given equal roles in the ruling and subduing the earth. Remember we saw that Eve was created as a helpmate for Adam (Gen. 2:18), He named her Eve (2:23) and when

¹ S. M Baugh, *Women in the Church*, Kostenberger and Schreiner ed, p. 60-61

sin entered through them both, Adam was held responsible (Rom. 5:12). We will see next week that the order of Creation matters in terms of roles in the church, and to neglect these is simply to raise a fist against God Himself.

“there is no male and female” (Gal. 3:28)

Finally, Galatians 3:28 (and Colossians 3:11 makes a similar argument) builds a beautiful case of equality in Christ, in the gospel, in the church, while maintaining distinctiveness. *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

Colossians adds circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian and Scythians to the list. Some have said this upholds **equality in everything**, but it is clear that in Christ we are all one since we ALL come as sinners, are saved by Christ alone, and have equal standing in salvation. However, a slave would still be a slave, a woman still a woman, a man still a man. We are ONE in Christ with distinctive differences created by God for our good and his glory.

Calling for Proper Conduct (8-10)

I **desire** then that in every place the men should pray, lifting **holy hands** without **anger** or **quarreling**; ⁹likewise 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, ¹⁰but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with **good works**.

Strong call for men to pray

Last week we looked closely at the different words for **desire** in 1 Timothy, one being an emotion desire or wish, which is the Greek word "thelo" and was used in 2:4. Here, Paul uses the word "*boulomai*", which is the desire of the purpose of the will, meaning something that will come to pass. Here Paul gives a strong call to the **men to lead out in prayer**. He is specifically speaking to the men of the church, since he did not use the word for mankind but the word that differentiates between men and women. His desire is a **command**, and he attaches it to his apostolic authority in verse 7.

"When Paul calls on men to pray 'in every place' he is probably referring to house churches. Thus, the directives here relate generically to a public church meeting where believers are gathered together. The words 'in every place' refer to all churches everywhere, not just those in Ephesus."²

The ones who should lead out in prayer were the men of the church. Does this mean women can never pray in gatherings? That is not what is explicitly taught here. After Jesus had ascended to heaven, the 11 remaining disciples gathered in a devoted time of prayer **with the women and Mary**, the mother of Jesus and His brothers (Acts 1:14). This has more to do with leading than restricting. Apparently the men of Ephesus had failed to lead out in gospel driven prayer, since they were not living holy lives and were living in anger and arguing with each other. The call to the men was not about a **posture of prayer but their heart and motive behind it**.

Without holiness, our prayers will be hindered. "If I cherished iniquity in my heart the Lord would not have listened (Psalm 66:18). "your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you **so that He does not hear.**" (Is. 59:2). "We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will,, **God listens to him**" (John 9:31 cf. James 4:3; Job27:9). In other words, we cannot come flippantly to Him, appeal to save the nations, and expect God to hear if we have been hiding or harboring sin. So we confess our sin, knowing He is faithful and just to forgive us of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9; cf Isa 1:15-18). This includes **anger**

² Thomas R. Shreiner, *Women in the Church*, p. 175.

we have directed at God or others, and we reconcile with those we are arguing against, since the Lord's servant is not quarrelsome (2 Tim. 2:24)

There are a couple of key principles here:

1. Public prayer by men should come out of an outflow or overflow of a private prayer life, one that walks intimately with God and desires what He does.
2. When men play their role well, in marriage and the church, it is much easier for women to play theirs.
3. Men in our culture (perhaps any culture) have a hard time leading in prayers. More often do we hear of women's ministries thriving or that women are prayer warriors, when it is men who should lead by example in this.

Strong call for women display modesty and godliness

Paul next picks up on this strong command and counsels the women in the church. Instead of leading in prayer, the women of Ephesus, and everywhere, should be well prepared for worship and gathering together with the church, both in appearance and action. The word **adorn** means to "arrange, make ready, or put in order". There should be thought behind action, preparation behind dress. The idea of **respectable apparel** would be equivalent to the idea of *appropriateness*. *How did someone decide what was appropriate?* The goal or heart behind one's dress would have been **modesty and self-control**. Modesty has the core idea of humility, where one is NOT trying to draw attention to oneself. Self-control was needed to put any urges to become the center of attention, to draw the eyes of married men, or to act in any way that would detract from the worship of God alone. Adorning this way has more to do with the heart of a woman than anything else:

"Do not let your **adorning** be external ---- the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear --- 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." 1 Pet. 3:3-4

In the city of Ephesus, there were some women who through marriage or other means would have access to much wealth, just like today, the way to let people know you are wealthy was to literally wear it on your head or around your neck. Gold would be intertwined in braided hair, with tortoise shell ornaments, pearls and other costly apparel worn to signal wealth. Is Paul saying it is wrong to be wealthy? Nope. Remember Lydia was wealthy enough to host the church in her home (Acts 16). It was the **flaunting of wealth** so that eyes would stare that was the problem, especially in the assembly of God's church.

Instead, those who desired to be **godly women** would devote themselves to good works, a reputation not of external beauty but of godly character. Later in 1 Timothy, Paul talked about godly widows who should be taken care of by the church. Their godliness was first shown in their own home and in taking care of parents (5:4), in bringing up children (5:10), showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, caring for the afflicted, and devoting herself to good works. In other words, what is **precious to God is NOT simply external beauty** (though external beauty is a good thing - Prov. 31:22). But a **godly woman knows**: *Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised!* (Prov. 31:30).

So when we gather together, we should:

Be prepared - We should be prepared in our mind, heart and body. We should confess our sin, reconcile with those we have quarreled with, and be thoughtful to how we dress so as NOT to bring attention to ourselves.

Be active - To pray and to serve, to lead out in gospel driven prayer and to look to the needs of others

Be humble - Modesty is tough, since there is no rigid standards of appropriateness but rather an examination of our heart, motives and intentions. If we are shown to be immodest, humility is willing to change in order to focus all attention onto God through Christ and away from ourselves.

Next week we'll begin to tackle what it means for women to learn in quietness and submissiveness, and to allow men to teach and have authority. What we will see is the beauty of walking in God's church together, playing our God prescribed roles, which will signal to the world that there is something different in our relationships because of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Clarifying the Complementing Functions (11-15)

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control

Posture and Character of women in corporate gatherings

Biblical Consistency for the command