

1 Timothy

A Call to Faithful Service

Lesson 4

To Timothy,
my true child
in the faith...



In the first eight verses of chapter 2, Paul writes about men and prayer life in the public meetings of the church. In verse 9, he begins a discussion of women in the public church assemblies.

These verses tend to be controversial in the church of the 21st century. Some claim that Paul is sexist or anti-women while others conclude these verses were written to combat a specific problem at a specific place at a specific time and therefore have little or nothing to do with the church today.

It is important for us to study difficult subjects and to seek to understand what God is saying in his word. Sometimes (perhaps often) Biblical teachings do not conform to the norms of our contemporary society. In these matters the instruction of Romans 12:2 is most helpful, *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

The Dress of Women in the Public Assembly (2:9-10)

In our last lesson we looked at Paul’s instruction to men in the Ephesian church. The problem for men in the assembly seems to have been anger and quarreling which was keeping them from praying as they should (2:8).

In 2:9 Paul turns his attention to the women whom he says should *“adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire.”*



Paul addresses the dress style of these women for at least two reasons: First, some of the women in Ephesian church have adapted the dress style of the non-Christians around them. This adornment may have been fashionable, but was not *“respectable,”* *“modest,”* or *“self-controlled.”* This indicates the attire was designed to draw attention to the appearance of the woman and not to her heart. Likewise, this dress style was expensive to maintain and not appropriate for the Christian lifestyle and especially within the public meetings of the church.¹

1. How could an expensive and extravagant style of dress affect Christian women who could not afford to dress in this manner?

¹ See also 1 Peter 3:3-4.

Second, the emphasis on modesty and decency indicate the attire of the women in the church at Ephesus may have appeared provocative or seductive to the men. While all men are responsible for their own thoughts and actions, women should understand that men are visual creatures and recognise that immodest or indecent attire can lead to unexpected and unwanted attention for the women and unnecessary temptation for the men.

Paul singles out “*braided hair*” which was not the normal style of Jewish or Gentile women in the first century, but was made popular by the prostitutes of that day. Gold, pearls, and costly attire all point to extravagant dress meant to impress, entice, and draw attention to oneself. Not only that, but contemporary literature of the time speaks of the tremendous time, expense, effort that was needed to elaborately braid hair in this manner.² The dress style that is proper is one that points to a godly lifestyle filled with good works.

2. What are some practical guidelines for dress styles for women in the church today?

Prohibition Against Women Teaching in the Church Assembly (2:11-15)

A number of years earlier Paul had written to the church in Corinth and said, “*...As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.*”³ What Paul now writes in 1 Timothy is similar which helps us to see that he is addressing what the normal practice should be in all the churches. He is not addressing a particular problem unique to just one congregation.

In 2:11 Paul writes, “*Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.*” The key words to define are “*learn*,” “*quietly*,” and “*submissiveness*.” First and foremost women were to learn; the gospel message is equally important to men and women and each should know, understand, and obey the teachings of Scripture.



The manner and mode of the woman’s learning is described as “quietly and with all submissiveness.” The word translated as “quietly” is the the Greek word *hesychia* which is used four times in the New Testament⁴ and means “quietness, silence, settling down, lack of disturbance.”⁵ This is not a word that means a total lack of speaking, and is not

² Knight, George W, III. *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text.* p. 135.

³ 1 Cor. 14:33-35

⁴ Acts 22:2, 2 Thess 3:12, 1 Tim 2:11, 12.

⁵ <https://www.teknia.com/greek-dictionary/hesychia>

the Greek word that is translated as “silence,” but does indicate a reserved, non-rebellious, and quiet demeanor.

Paul does not teach that “women should surrender their minds and consciences to men, but that they should voluntarily take the position of learners in church meetings.”⁶ This idea is further impressed in the phrase “all submissiveness.” This teaching is for life within the church assembly and the submissiveness is to those men who are leaders within the church.

1 Tim 2:12 reinforces this understanding when we read, *“I do not permit a women to teach or exercise authority over a man; rather she is to remain quiet.”* The word “I” have led some to conclude that Paul is writing of his own personal feelings and therefore not relevant for the church today. We do well to understand that all Scripture ultimately comes to us from God so as Paul writes as an apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, we have teaching that comes directly from God to us through Paul.

3. How do attacks on Scripture weaken the church?

The word translated as “*exercise authority*”⁷ means simply to assume a stance of authority.⁸ Women then, are not to teach in the church assembly or have authority over men within the church. This **does not** preclude women from teaching other women or children in the church or teaching men outside the church.⁹ This **does** prevent women from publicly teaching in the church and **does not** allow women to serve as preachers or elders.



This prohibition of women teachers and leaders in the church is not based on the faithfulness, intelligence, Biblical knowledge, or speaking ability of any woman. This teaching looks back to Genesis and the Creation order and the introduction of sin into the world (2:13). Adam was created before Eve and was designated by God as leader in the home. Just as men are leaders within the home, likewise men are to lead in the house of God. This is a part of the original created order.

In 2:14 we read that it was Eve, not Adam who was deceived by the Satan. Eve was first to sin though Scripture repeatedly speaks of the sin of Adam. It was Adam who was to exercise spiritual leadership in the home, but he did not. This serves as the first example of the failure of male spiritual leadership in the home.

4. In what way or ways may Adam have failed to lead his family at this time of temptation?

⁶ Constable, Thomas L. *Notes on 1 Timothy: 2007 Edition*. p. 26.

⁷ Greek word αὐθεντεῖν (authentein).

⁸ ESV Greek tools.

⁹ Titus 2:3-5; 2 Tim 1:5; Acts 18:26.

After the fall, and as a part of judgment against on Eve, God reconfirmed male leadership (Gen. 3:16). This male leadership role extends only to the home and the church and not to life in general society.

We should clearly note that leadership and submission does not equal superiority. In 1 Cor. 15:28 the Son (Jesus) submitted to the Father. We know that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal, but served distinctive roles. Women and men are totally equal in God's eyes for all are created in his image, but men and women are created to have different roles in the home and in the church.

5. Explain why you believe or do not believe that different roles do or do not equal superiority/inferiority.

1 Tim 2:15 is a difficult verse to understand, but what we do know is that Paul is not saying that women gain salvation through childbirth; we know salvation comes through believing and obeying the gospel.



Paul may have been pointing to the virgin birth since in the original language the phrase is literally, “she will be saved yet through the childbearing. The article “the” may make this refer to a particular childbirth; that is Jesus. So, far from negating the importance of women perhaps Paul is saying all salvation comes from the one born of a woman.

One other interpretation of this passage that has merit is the possibility that Paul wants women to see the unique and powerful influence that is found in motherhood. Mother's bring life into this world and have great influence on their children for Christ. As Christian women are encouraged to continue in faith, love and holiness, with self-control.

Dr. James E. Smith writes, “Faith, love, sanctification or holiness and sobriety or propriety (self-control) are graces in which Christian women, more often than not, exceed men. Women teach by example. They model Christian graces. In this way they often exert an influence in the church far greater than those who have been designated as the leaders.”¹⁰

Practical Application

1. Men and women have different roles within the family and the church. This does not mean that one is superior and the other inferior. These roles are different, unique, and complementary.
2. Men and women should each submit to the teaching of Scripture and do their best to love, honor, and serve God.

¹⁰ Smith, James E. *Exhortation Epistles*. Lulu, 2011, p. 70