

Men and Women

Continuing Paul's Instructions to the Church

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

⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire,

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

¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.

¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve;

¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing-- if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

(1 Timothy 2:8-15)

Men Vs. Women

Men vs. women. It seems that nearly everyone in our culture wants to pit them against one another, including a great majority in the church. It's like people need this huge hostility between the two in order to give their lives meaning. Over the last hundred or so years, we've seen this

age-old rivalry become more of a level playing field, take turns for the better and worse, and right now, we are seeing much of it blow up in our collective faces to the point where many don't think that men and women even exist anymore.

Take tennis as an example of how this has worked itself out. It begins with some woman **long ago** getting angry that she is not allowed to play in any sports because she is a girl. Over time, this led to the formation of **women's sports** and sports leagues where girls competed against girls, and all was well in the world. Until, women got angry that they weren't making the **same amount of money** as the men. Enter the famous "Battle of the Sexes" tennis matches in the early '70s. **Bobby Riggs**, former world #1, but now well into his 50s, a self-proclaimed male chauvinist, started egging on the world's best women's players with some pretty disgusting taunts. In May of 1973, he managed to get then #1 **Margaret Court** to play him, and he whipped her, only adding fuel to the fire. In Sept. of that same year, 29-year-old **Billy Jean King**, feminist extraordinaire and in the prime of her career, accepted the challenge and soundly defeated the man "**as old as my father.**"

This paved the way for the US Open to begin paying women equal to the men. But over the course of the years,

something strange has taken place and it has been fascinating to watch feminists like King **say absolutely nothing** about it. In fact, King supported it as much as 45 years ago! Suddenly, it became popular for men, physically dominating the more diminutive fairer sex, to announce to the world that they were **girls**. One example which took place four years later occurred when **Richard Raskind**, who had, “**got mixed sexual messages from her family**” and was “**being tormented by a sadistic sister raised to be ‘the man of the house,’**”¹ had by this point undergone the surgery to become Renee Richards, and had been winning all kinds of women’s tournaments, **sued the US Open** to play as a woman. King, who had partnered with Raskind in a female doubles tournament, of course, sided with her friend, who won the appeal, and this person who was now 43 years old, made it all the way to the finals of the US Open in ladies doubles.

Today, all-girl leagues are often forced by the state to let these men play and, shocker, they **immediately dominate all their competition**, winning district and state titles in things like track and field, wrestling, and weightlifting. Funny how it never seems to go that the women want to compete

¹ David B. Green, “This Day in Jewish History | 1977: Renee Richards Wins Game, Set and Match for Transgender Rights,” *Haaretz* (Aug 16, 2016), <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-1977-renee-richards-wins-for-transgender-rights-1.5425096>.

as men, isn't it? The whole "uber-equality" worldview ends up collapsing in on itself for a variety of reasons, but many are so tethered to such relativistic slippery ideas about the sexes that they are [silenced as their own philosophy is used against them](#). Feminism became the leading cause of a seemingly benign movement for equality that eventually turned into bewildering insanity. But it isn't just feminism.

It's also [male chauvinism](#) and certain forms of [patriarchy](#). To egg the women on, [Riggs](#) told the world that the only two places a woman belonged was in the bedroom and the kitchen, in that order. This kind of dehumanizing treatment of women has long held sway in many parts of most cultures in world history. And the church is no outsider to it. One example that has struck me since I first heard it took place in the hard-core patriarchy wing of the so-called [Family Integrated Movement](#).

The story centers upon a soon-to-fall leader of the now defunct non-profit called [Vision Forum](#). Douglas Phillips, a darling of the home-school movement at the turn of the century would lose his multi-million-dollar empire overnight after multiple sexual and physical abuse of women scandals rocked the Forum, toppling it and him to the

ground. This story is told by his own “self-proclaimed” mentor in his adolescent years, his pastor.

Pastor Gifford and his wife were invited over to Phillip’s house. Unbeknownst to him, another couple was also invited, a man who had himself been clearly sent to “**instruct me about marriage and family**” in spite of Gifford himself having delivered “**over a hundred messages ... on marriage and family**” during his many years in ministry. But clearly, he says, the whole evening was **orchestrated** so that he could be “**indoctrinated in Patriarchy.**” He tells the rest of the story this way:

We sat around the table while everyone listened to this man lecture me. After he got done, Doug had us all move into the living room where the men all sat down on the couches. My wife sat next to me; but I noticed all the other women stood behind their husbands, including [his wife]. It was very strange. They just stood there the whole time behind their husbands. I thought we were going to have a nice conversation. But it wasn’t a conversation, and it was very uncomfortable. This guy ... took over and started asking me questions. The last thing he asked me was, “If you were in a grocery store and your children started to act rebellious, how would you respond?” So I said, “I don’t go shopping. My wife shops. Honey, what would you do?” So my wife starts

to answer and this Thompson guy cuts her off and says, “Excuse me! I’m speaking to the men!” At this point I really had to hold myself back. Doug just sat there the whole time and said nothing. It was obvious that [he] set this whole thing up. At this point we got up and left.²

This kind of treatment of women is despicably anti-biblical and, in my mind, often belies unseen sin (that happened to come out in Phillips’ case). And yet, for thousands of years, some men have treated women this way (and much much worse).

Perhaps both of these perversions are summarized by the so-called **Gospel of Thomas**, a late second century Gnostic document that literally ends with Simon Peter telling Jesus, “Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.” Jesus responded, “I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven” (Gospel of Thomas 114).³ There are reasons these books

² T. W. Eston, “Doug Phillips’ Mentor and Spiritual Father Speaks Out,” *Jen’s Gems* (Dec 19, 2013), <https://jensgems.wordpress.com/tag/patriarchy/>.

³ **Going Deeper.** The Gospel of Thomas “Jesus” is not saying he will give Mary a sex-change. Rather, this is typical Gnosticism where the physical (evil, associated with women) is contrasted with the spiritual (good, associated with men). While it can be read that this Jesus is rebuking this Peter and somehow giving Mary a chance at salvation, something that the real Gospels never have to justify, it is without question that the root philosophy here is deeply sexist.

were so heavily condemned by the early church, and it had nothing to do with patriarchal male chauvinist power-hungry bishops silencing true religion to perpetuate their lies that they called orthodoxy, as is becoming ever more popular these days to believe. Rather, they literally create **a different Gospel**.

In fact, even as their condemnation of such wicked views about women here demonstrates, Christianity has actually been **the most liberating force in history** for women whom all other ancient religions viewed as almost sub-human, including, as we see here, Gnosticism. But while other perverted attempts to bring dignity and equality to women, such as modern feminism, make up arbitrary rules that

Douglas Groothuis rightly calls it “**contempt for women.**” (Douglas Groothuis, “What Jesus Thought about Women: His Regard for Them Was Unusual for His Time—Even Scandalous,” *Priscilla Papers* 16.3 [2002]: 17.) Daniel Doriani says of it, “**The gnostics are elitists, promising deliverance to initiates who receive secret (not public) truths. They deny the value of creation, asserting that the body is evil and must not be rescued. They are sexists.**” Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew & 2*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 370.

That said, it is *astonishing* to read the lengths some people will go to in order to make this passage say the opposite of what it so obviously does. For a list of these see the Visitor’s Comments at Peter Kirby, “Gospel of Thomas Saying 114,” (2012), <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/thomas/gospelthomas114.html#>. While the blatant sexism of the Gnostic worldview on full display in this passage is self-evidently sexist, these comments in turn remind me of how twisted and perverted full-blown feminism is such that it can even take the most sexist statements and justify them under the name of feminist spirituality. It reminds me very much of Billy Jean King who literally undermined any good that feminism may have brought to women as she sided with her friend, a friend who helped her win many women’s doubles matches, even though her partner was born a man. There was nothing innocent or neutral about her support of this pathology. King herself has her own sexual pathologies (she was at that time an in-the-closet lesbian) that certainly played into it.

continually change with the times, Christianity has always done this only by *observing the proper objective creational order*, rather than through revolution or reinvention.

Consider the Scripture, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). And yet, God made eve to be, not identical to Adam, but “a helper fit for him” (2:18). They were equal and yet created complementary to one another.

It is for this reason that we see a constant tension in Scripture regarding women. On one hand we see them *singing songs* (Miriam in Ex 15:20; Hannah in 1Sam 2:1-10; Mary in Luke 1:46-56), *leading nations* (Deborah in Jdg 5; Queen of Sheba in 1Kg 10), *writing and teaching proverbs* (Ling Lemuel’s mother in Prov 31); *teaching new converts* (like Priscilla with her husband in Acts 18:26), *working hard in the Lord* with the Apostles (like Mary, Trophæa, Tryphosa, and Persis in Rom 16:6, 12), and so on. The Bible puts a positive spin on all of these, and yet at the same time, this is *not the norm*.

Woman not only do all kinds of things in Scripture, but they are held up as *ontological equals* both in creation (Gen 1) and *in Christ* (“In Christ there is no male or female;” Gal

3:28). Jesus goes out of his way to talk to them, to the point of greatly irritating his disciples. They become “followers” (Matt 27:55-56), and yet are not called apostles⁴ or pastors. More tension. Unlike the Talmud which said, “It would be better for the words of Torah to be burned, than that they should be entrusted to a woman,”⁵ and “the men came to learn, the women came to hear,”⁶ women are both able and encouraged to learn, and in some circumstances, to teach others. And yet, there are restrictions that are placed upon them in the New Testament, to the chagrin of many Christians today.

Men and Women: The Interpretive Mine Field

All this is lead-in to our passage. As I said last time, 1 Timothy 2 takes us into a host of mine fields, of which we looked at several last time. But we have not cleared them yet. The second half of the chapter which we enter into today

⁴ Junia (most likely a woman; Rom 16:7) is possibly called an apostle (compare the ESV with the NAS). However, the word simply means a messenger. It is distinct in this usage from the office of Apostle, which consisted only of 14 total men in history. See Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Second Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 939.

⁵ Cited in In John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1996), 85.

⁶ Cited in George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 139.

will see us navigating several more. The field before us is hot and live. It directly addresses the [feminist-egalitarian-complementarian](#) debates that have been so lively over the last forty years in Evangelicalism and beyond. In fact, it is one of the most important passages on this topic.

It is a passage that deals with [restrictions](#) Paul places on women in the church. In recent years, this has made many people quite upset. Others get quite frustrated when they think they have found a way to wiggle out of the restrictions for modern day people, but then you come along and disagree with them.

I've been in several classes, always taught by feminist/egalitarians, where we were told why this passage doesn't mean what the church has always thought it means. Their typical arguments are either [philosophical](#) at the root, [select word-studies](#) that cherry pick their way out of traditional interpretations, and/or cultural deep dives into the ancient city of Ephesus that then allowed them, they think, to make the command relevant only to Timothy's situation, but certainly not to ours. A proper interpretation must not begin with these things. Instead, we must be fair and honest with the context the passage is situated in.

1 Timothy 2:1-15—Context and Structure

Let's begin by noticing again that this chapter is naturally structured into two halves.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| A. "Prayers" (2:1-3) | A. Women: proper adornment (2:9-10) |
| B. "Truth" (4) | B. Woman learn quietly (11) |
| C. "One God" (5a) | C. Woman/Man/authority (12a) |
| C'. "One Mediator" (5a-6) | B'. Woman remain quiet (12b) |
| B'. "Truth" (7) | A'. Women/men/childbearing (13-15) ⁷ |
| A'. "Pray" (8) | |

The first half is about **corporate prayer** in the church. The second half, our passage, is about the **role of men and women**.

Just here, some want to say that it is not about the role of *men* and *women*, but rather **husbands and wives**. This is because the word for a husband is identical to the word for man (*andres* from *anēr*) and the word for a woman is identical to the word for a wife (*gynaikas* from *gunē*).⁸ They rightly notice that in several other passages where the Apostle gives very similar instructions, we translate them as husbands and wives (see **Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Pet 3:1-7**). A passage

⁷ Modified from **Christine Smith**, "1 Timothy 2," *A Little Perspective* (Sept 26, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/1-timothy-2-2016/>.

⁸ **Our passage translates these words as man and woman. However, passages like Eph**

like 1 Peter 3 even has many of the same ideas as our passage here:

1 Timothy 2:8 – 12	1 Peter 3:7 and 1 – 6 ⁹
8 Therefore I want husbands (<i>tous andras</i>) everywhere to pray (<i>proseuchesthai</i>) lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing [with their wives].	7 Husbands (<i>hoi andres</i>), in the same way live considerately with your wives, showing them honor as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers (<i>proseuchas</i>).
9 Likewise, I want wives (<i>gynaikas</i>) to adorn (<i>kosmein</i>) themselves with proper dress (<i>kosmio</i>), with decency and propriety, not with braided (<i>plegmasin</i>) hair or gold (<i>chrysiç</i>) or pearls or expensive clothes (<i>himatismo</i>), 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God (<i>theosebeian</i>). 11 A wife should learn in quietness (<i>hesychia</i>) and full submission (<i>hypotage</i>). 12 I do not permit a wife (<i>gynaiki</i>) to teach – that is, to boss her husband (<i>andros</i>); she must be quiet (<i>hesychia</i>).	1 In the same way, wives (<i>gynaikes</i>), be submissive (<i>hypotassomenai</i>) to your husbands (<i>andrasin</i>) so that, if any of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the reverence and purity of your lives. 3 Your adornment (<i>kosmos</i>) should not be merely outward – braiding (<i>emplokes</i>) your hair, wearing gold (<i>chrysiou</i>) and putting on clothes (<i>himation</i>). 4 Instead it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet (<i>hesychiou</i>) spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.
13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but his wife was deceived and became a sinner. 15 But she will be saved even through childrearing – that is, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness (<i>hagiasmo</i>) with propriety.	5 For this is the way the holy wives (<i>hagiai gynaiques</i>) of the past who put their hope in God (<i>theon</i>) used to adorn (<i>ekosmoun</i>) themselves. They were submissive (<i>hypotassomenai</i>) to their own husbands (<i>andrasin</i>), 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

⁹ Chart in Marko A. Nagasawa, “The Implications of the Chiastic Structure of 1 Timothy on the Question of Women in Church Leadership,” *New Humanity Institute* [July 13, 2021], http://www.newhumanityinstitute.org/pdfs/paul_1timothy-chiasm-&-women-as-elders.pdf.

While there is no doubt that that the two passages have **much overlap**, it is not enough to just compare words to say that Timothy must be translated like we translate Peter. This is where we need to see more of the structure. Let's recall that our chapter is also chiasmic.

- A. "Therefore," "first," "prayers," "quiet," "all godliness," "saved" (2:1-3)
- B. "Truth" (4)
- C. "One God" (5a)
- C'. "One Mediator" (5a-6)
- B'. "Truth" (7)
- A'. "Therefore," "pray," "godliness," "all," "quietness," "first," "saved" (8-15)

Things to note here are how not only does our passage have much overlap with 1 Peter, it also has much overlap with 1 Tim 2:1-3. In fact, the words **prayer, godliness, all, quietness, first, and saved** are all found in these parallels. This links them together.

But what does that matter? It matters because **the context of the first half of the chapter is very clearly corporate worship**. This would lead us to conclude that Paul is **not now changing the topic** to individual households (which is Peter's obvious intention), but is continuing to talk about **corporate worship**. **Vs. 8** is the key that links these two together. The first half of

the chapter focuses on **prayer** in corporate worship. The second half deals with men and women's roles *in corporate worship*. Vs. 8 talks about **prayer** and men, thus connecting the two halves.¹⁰ So we are continuing to deal with instructions

¹⁰ We are going to see in both chapter 5 and chapter 6 that there are also many overlapping words and ideas with chapter 2. But rather than those focusing us to conclude that this means women are to be elders as Nagasawa argues, it simply highlights that the book itself is two halves. What comes after is parallel, but not identical to what comes after.

Christian Worship (2:1 – 15)	Instructions to Women (5:2-14) ¹⁰	Christian Worship: The Chiasmic Parallel (6:1 – 11) ¹⁰
Supplications, prayers (2:1) That we may lead a tranquil and quiet life (2:2)	Supplications, prayers (5:5)	That the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against (6:1)
<i>Respect authority:</i> for king and all who are in authority (2:1 – 2) Life in all godliness and dignity (2:2, 10)	Godliness (5:4)	<i>Respect authority:</i> for masters (6:1 – 2) Conforming to godliness... godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment (6:3 – 6)
Entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgiving (2:1)		Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness (6:11)
Pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved (2:3 – 4)	Pleasing in the sight of God (5:4)	Foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction (6:9)
Knowledge of the truth... I was appointed... a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth (2:4, 7)		Teach and preach... sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ... deprived of the truth (6:2, 3, 5)
I was appointed... a teacher of the Gentiles in faith (2:7)		Some by longing for [money] have wandered away from the faith (6:10)
<i>Materialism critiqued:</i> modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments (2:9)	Self-indulgent (5:6)	<i>Materialism critiqued:</i> But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil... (6:6 – 11)
Good works (2:10) Profess Godliness (2:10) <i>Submissiveness:</i> A wife must quietly receive instructions with entire submissiveness (2:11) Do not permit a woman to teach (2:11)	Good works (5:10) Abandon former faith (5:12) Learn to be idlers (5:13) Not idlers, gossips, busybodies (5:13)	<i>Service:</i> Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more (6:2)
<i>Deception:</i> And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (2:14)	Stayed after Satan (5:15)	<i>Deception:</i> He... understands nothing... of depraved mind and deprived of the truth (6:3 – 6)
Childbearing (2:15)	Bear children (5:14)	We have brought nothing into the world (6:7)

about corporate worship of the church. “Men” and “women” is the right translation, as we see in literally every translation you can get your hands on.

1 Timothy 2:8—Men Lift Holy Hands in Prayer

I’m going to say more about the structure later, but first, I want to deal with **1Tim 2:8**. This is **the one verse today that focuses in on men**. It says, “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.” As you can see, Paul has not finished thinking about public prayer. He wants men to **lift holy hands** in prayer. So what does this mean?

First, let’s address the question of **place**. It is tempting, without knowing the context, to think that this is a general command to men wherever they go. But it isn’t. This is still corporate worship. These Christians did not meet in large, specially designed church buildings, but in houses. They would alternate between houses, and so “**in every place**” refers to “**the various ‘places’ (house-churches) in which Christians at Ephesus met for worship.**”¹¹

This middle column and its associated parallels in ch. 2 come from **Doug Heidebrecht**, “Reading 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Its Literary Context,” *Direction* 33.2 (2004): 175 [171-84], https://www.academia.edu/8251925/Reading_1_Timothy_2_9_15_in_Its_Literary_Context.

This right column and its associated parallels in ch. 2 come from **Nagasawa**.

¹¹ **Douglas Moo**, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 178.

Now, **the posture of the prayer**. It is the **lifting up** of hands. Some want to know if this means they must raise their hands in order to be honoring God. I'll get to why he talks about raising hands in a moment. But first, it is important to see that **there are many postures of prayer** in Scripture. Sometimes there is the **bowing** of the head (**Ps 5:7; 95:6**). Sometimes they **kneel** (**Dan 6:10; Acts 7:60**). Sometimes they **lay flat** on the ground, which makes raising hands particularly impossible (**Num 16:22; 20:6**). Sometimes, however, the people all **stood** (**2Chr 6:3; Neh 9:5**). Each posture conveys something different. Bowing is a sign of humility. Standing is a sign of respect. Laying flat is a sign of abasement. Raising hands is a sign of praise or reception. The point is, there are many ways to pray, some are not mutually exclusive, but some are.

Certainly, it is both **fine and biblical to raise one's hands**. Usually, people do this while singing. But this is to be done *while praying*. This is a sign even more than praise, of intercession, and it was precisely that kind of prayer that was spoken of earlier in the chapter. Given these things, it is fine for the man praying to raise his hands, but it isn't obligatory (for example, his posture might not allow it).

The real reason I believe Paul says this is because he is **contrasting the raising of hands** with anger and quarrelling. Isaiah contrasted fasting with the **raising of wicked hands**. “Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high” (Isa 58:4). The point in both instances seems to be that you pray and fast while simultaneously harbor anger and rage towards your brothers. You raise your hands to God while you raise your hands to strike your brother. Think about what I said earlier about the way men have often treated women. This is a matter of the heart and hypocrisy. This ought not to be.

It is likely that the reason this was happening, at least in Ephesus, was because of the false teaching which was causing “**divisiveness and discord**” (1Ti 6:4-5). That doesn’t mean this is only a saying that was for the men at Ephesus and not for us. Can you imagine someone arguing that just because they don’t like the command? No, the command is universal. **Christian behavior** becomes the real focus of attention, not only here, but in what he will now say about the women.

1 Timothy 2:9-10—Women Adorn Yourselves in Good Works

Summarized in **1Ti 3:15**, “If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth,” Paul now **shifts to the women**. He does this with the linking word, “**likewise...**” This word demonstrates in yet another way that he is still talking about corporate worship, not how you conduct yourself in your private family.

His instructions could lead to some confusion. In fact, it has led to a lot more than confusion. Philip Ryken says, “Thomas Oden claims that ‘this paragraph of Paul’s letter to Timothy cannot be read without raising hackles and blood pressure.’ One assumes he means the hackles of women and the blood pressure of ministers!”¹²

So what does Paul say? “**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...**” (9). Someone might be sitting there with braids in their hair and think, just like the man who

¹² Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Daniel M. Doriani, and Philip Graham Ryken, ReformBd Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 80.

didn't raise his hands in the prayer prior to the sermon, “**Am I sinning against God?**”

The most direct way to answer this is simply to let Paul continue. “... but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works” (10). Notice that he is doing exactly the same thing to the women as he just did with the men. *Men, stop fighting and sinning and then pretending to be all righteous in public prayer. Women, stop coming to church to impress men. Instead, impress God with your obedience to him.* The focus is on good works. It is a contrast.

But one might ask, can a woman have braids in her hair and still be godly and possess good works? Or, is this hypocritical just like a man being angry and quarreling while praying to God? Notice the words “modesty” and “self-control” that accompany the apparel and braided hair and golden jewelry. Here it helps to know a little of the context.

Just like today when you watch something like the Grammy Awards, ostentatious, immodest dress often signaled a woman's loose morals and independence from her husband.¹³ The Testament of Judah gives you a taste of what was happening. “For women are evil, my children, and by reason of their lacking authority or power over man, they scheme treacherously how they might entice him to

¹³ Moo, 178-79.

themselves by means of their looks. They contrive in their hearts against men, then by decking themselves out they lead men's minds astray ... accordingly, my children, flee from sexual promiscuity, and order your wives and your daughters not to adorn their heads and their appearances so as to deceive men's sound minds" (T.Reub 5). It's interesting to hear **the blatant sexism** here. Not *all* women are like this. Nevertheless, it is without question that some women are.

The point about hair is also interesting in light of changing Greek styles.



Roman woman with braided hair

In the Greek world, women's hairstyles were simple: The hair was pinned in the back and held up with a simple band or scarf. In public, respectable women would wear veils on the top of the head, which fell down the back to the shoulders and hid any elaborate hairdo. Only a shady woman or one in mourning would appear in public with her hair untied and unveiled. However, in the mid-first century, women throughout the empire were copying the elaborate braided and ornamented hairdos of the Roman empresses (many of whom were quite scandalous).¹⁴

¹⁴ S. M. Baugh, "1 Timothy," in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon.*, vol. 3, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 456–457.

Baugh says that the equivalent today is warning Christian women and girls away from imitating the styles set by promiscuous **pop singers or actresses**.¹⁵ In other words, the concern is not with braids, but with loose morals, seductive attire, bad motives for going to church, and overall general immodesty and desire to be independent from the authority of men.

But God doesn't look on the outward appearance. Rather, he **sees the heart**. Though he is talking about husbands and wives, certainly Peter is a good parallel here. “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. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves...” (1 Pe 3:3-5).

1 Timothy 2:11-15—I Do Not Permit a Woman to Teach...

That Evil Word: Submission

¹⁵ S. M. Baugh, “A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century,” in A. J. Köstenberger et al., eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 47-48.

Now, Peter goes on to say something that immediately gets him into trouble with the modern woman. “... used to adorn themselves, by *submitting* to their own husbands.” Likewise, Paul now continues, “Let a woman learn quietly with all *submissiveness*.” The connection is *submissiveness*. While a couple things we have said thus far are little mines, this one might just be the granddaddy of the book.

If there was a way to write submission as a four-letter word in English, that’s how most people would spell it. There is *nothing more foreign to feminist mind than submission*. Part of this has to do with the fact that many men have turned submission into all out abuse. It is telling that one woman writes, “Every single one of my feminist friends was abused by a man who was supposed to be her protector: a father, an uncle, a husband.... Is it any wonder these women don’t trust men or that they equate ‘submission’ with co-dependence, downright mindlessness, or worse, masochism?”¹⁶ In my opinion, men are likely more responsible for the rise of the crazy times we live in than women, for the way they have wrongly abused and mistreated them over the years.

¹⁶ Anonymous, quoted in *Susan Hunt, By Design: God’s Distinctive Calling for Women* (Franklin, TN: Legacy, 1994), 68. Cited in Ryken, 92.

Paul does not mean that if women do not submit that the men are to beat them into it. Rather, he will later tell **church leaders not to be domineering dictators** but kind and mild servant leaders (**1Ti 3:1-4**). Beyond that, the NT always speaks of **submission in positive terms**. The correct place to start here is not with the battle of the sexes, but with your own relationship to God.

Without question, **Christians are to submit to God**. Is that evil? Why do it? So that he can be a tyrant over us? So that he can beat us into submission? So that he can lord his authority over us? No, because he is God and because he will always do what is good and right and best for us. Therefore, we gladly submit. Submission is not a hard thing to do when you trust and love the person you are submitting to.

In fact, **every one of us must submit to others in all kinds of relationships** that we have over the course of our lives. Employees submit to bosses. Children submit to parents. Citizens submit to police officers. Teams submit to coaches. Freshmen submit to Seniors. Those who get their hair cut submit to barbers. The list is endless. Sometimes we submit because we must. Other times we quite willingly and naturally submit. The kind of submission called for here is not begrudging, not half-hearted, not angry submission. It

is submission done out of love and the understanding that it is for your best. Submission is the appropriate response to those God puts in authority over you. If you need look elsewhere, look no further than the Lord Jesus himself, who submitting willingly to his Father in all things.

Learning, Teaching, Authority

In what we've read up to this point, we should now look at the word "learn." Paul is **encouraging women to learn!** This is precisely **the opposite** of how the ancient world, as we have seen, treated women. Remember? Women couldn't learn, only "hear." This fact alone places a high regard on women in the very sentence that makes many of them so angry. If they are to learn, then it presumes that they will also then pass that learning on to at least someone in the form of teaching. And, indeed, if you've ever read Proverbs 31, then you know that King Lemuel is only teaching you what was taught to him ... by a woman, his mother!

In fact, we find the Bible talking about **women teaching**, and even teaching men, in various places. Joel predicted, **"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour**

out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and *your daughters* shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants *and female servants* in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17–18). Paul instructs the entire church, composed of both men and women to, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” (Col 3:16). When we sing together, we teach one another. Alongside of her husband, Aquilla, Priscilla invited Apollos, “an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24) to her house and together they “explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18). Many men have done much harm in making our passage some kind of universal with no exceptions. Women are not only made in God’s image, but together we make up a kingdom of priests.

All that said, we must keep reading. “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness” probably has at least something to do with them learning in Ephesus and then being busybodies, gossips, and general troublemakers as we will see later in the letter, that caused some of them to even forsake the faith, as they got wrapped up in the false

teachings sweeping through this church, and apparently, began propagating it throughout the congregation.

It is perhaps into this specific occasion that Paul makes the next comment. “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.” Many feminists and egalitarians want to focus on why the *hapex* (i.e. used only one time in the NT) “authority” really means something like domination or overpowering, or some other kind of violent behavior. They say it is a completely negative word that would therefore apply to men as well. Therefore, Paul is not forbidding them having authority, but abusing it.

This is a strange argument. If it is the abuse of power, why doesn't Paul just say he doesn't want anyone to abuse authority? In fact, why would he need to say this at all? Why single out women? Egalitarians usually want to say that some kind of bad feminism was afoot in Ephesus that caused the women to do this. The problem is, there is absolutely zero historical proof of this assertion.¹⁷ Most importantly, there is a small structure here, connecting vv. 11 and 12 to one another:

¹⁷ See Baugh, “Foreign World.”

- A. Learn quietly (11a)
- B. All submissiveness (11b)
- C. **To teach (12a)**
- B'. Exercise authority (12b)
- A'. Remain quiet (12c)

The parallel with submissiveness, which is not an evil word, but a good word used in a positive way tells us that **exercising authority is also a good word** used in a positive way.¹⁸

Submissiveness and exercising authority guard and interpret the focal point of the argument, which is on *teaching*. Using Scripture to interpret Scripture, it is clear that this is not a universal command that no women is ever to teach anything to anyone. We've already seen that. Rather, the context is **in public worship**. In the next chapter, Paul will begin discussing qualifications for **elders** who are the teachers of the church and leaders of public worship. Those elders are to have "one wife." He does not add, "Or one husband." These overlaps, along with the exercising of authority over men in public worship, has led the church for 2,000 years to universally interpret this as women are not to

¹⁸ **Dan Doriani**, *Women and Ministry: What the Bible Teaches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 92-93. **Andreas J. Köstenberger**, "A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church*, 81-103.

teach as elders of the church.¹⁹ It has really only been in the last 100 years (in the sects and cults a lot longer) that this was even debated. By the way, this command not only applies to women, but to **the vast majority of men**, because most men are either not qualified to be elders or do not want the position.

Ryken summarizes the nuts and bolts application. “Where is such authority exercised in the church? Certainly in the writing of creeds and confessions that summarize Christian doctrine, and also in the formulation of church policy on theological issues. The word [authority] *authenthein* hints that church discipline also may be in view. These things are the exclusive work of the elders of the church. So is preaching, which is the authoritative proclamation of Scripture.”²⁰ Do you really want ungodly, unqualified men doing these things either?

I have basically come to the conclusion over the years the same thing almost all other complementarians who have studied this issue have. “Paul’s prohibition is permanent but

¹⁹ This should be self-evident from the fact that no church until the middle of the 19th century ever ordained women, 1853 (Congregationalists) in fact. For a list See **Mark Chaves**, *Ordaining Women* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 16-17. For a study on church history see **Daniel Doriani**, “A History of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2,” in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 213–67.

²⁰ **Ryken**, 97.

partial ... women may teach privately, informally, and occasionally. But, Paul says, they should not present the essentials of the faith as authoritative church leaders. The task of guarding the gospel occupied Paul's letters to Timothy. That task belongs to the elders or "overseers" who are male; they are "the husband of one wife."²¹

Man was Formed First

But we are not yet finished with the passage. What comes next is really all I have ever needed to convinced me of this position. I said earlier that Christianity has always been the most liberating force for women in history. It is this way precisely because *it follows good creational order* as it does this. This is where Paul goes next as he finishes up this chapter.

"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" (1Ti 2:13-15). I've read a lot from egalitarians and feminists on this passage over the years and I can honestly

²¹ Doriani, *Women*, 91.

say I've never read a single good argument explaining why Paul goes to creation here.

In moving to Adam and Eve, Paul moves far beyond any cultural problem that we might use to justify why this passage no longer applies today. The Garden is the great Trans-Culture. Indeed, at the moment we enter the story, *they have not yet fallen*. So there was no evil specific cultural problem that Adam and Eve had that we no longer have to worry about. Paul is signaling something to us *inherent* in the way God created men and women. That's the point. As Ryken says, "*The roles of men and women are founded upon God-given distinctions between the male and the female.*"²² I'm going to follow Ryken's argument here, sometimes word for word, because I find it clear, concise, and helpful.

Paul picks up the story right at that moment when our parents fell into sin. And in doing this, he is making a transcendent, omni-historical argument that applies to all churches at all times. *Adam was formed first, then Eve*. This is not some kind of *mere analogy*, as some want to make it,²³ because what would Adam being created first be an analogy

²² Ryken, 100.

²³ *Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 216-22.

of? Nor is Paul saying that Adam is somehow **superior** to Eve. What Paul says is similar to the ancient law of primogeniture—i.e. **the firstborn son** carried with him the spiritual responsibility for the family. It has nothing to do with talent or giftedness, but birthright. Adam being formed first does not stem from the fall, but rather from the created order, which was no accident of nature.

He moves next to *Adam not being deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor*. **Paul is not blaming Eve for the fall** as if what Paul is saying here is that men should preach because women can't be trusted. This has nothing to do with some kind of greater propensity of women to be led astray. Clearly, men can't be trusted either. Indeed, we have already seen two men mentioned by name that were leading the church into heresy! As Ryken points out, the vast majority of heresies in church history have been disseminated by men. This has nothing to do with men being less vulnerable to false theology.

The key is the word “**deceived**” which comes from **Genesis 3:13**. The point is that Adam was not the one deceived. Unlike Eve, he knew full well what he was doing when he ate the forbidden fruit. The woman was blinded by Satan as to the true nature of sin. Adam's eyes were wide

open. So someone concludes, “Eve was not at fault; she was deceived. Adam, in the other hand, was not deceived but, deliberately and with understanding, chose to sin.”²⁴

Adam’s willful disobedience hardly recommends him for pastoral ministry! But it does indicate something important about God’s plan for humanity. God held Adam principally responsible for the fall. We all fell in Adam, not in Eve (**Rom 5:14-15**). The Bible doesn’t teach that men should preach because they will do a better job of it, nor because they are more eloquent, nor because they are alone capable of putting together a good sermon. The fall of our first parents shows us what can happen when we reverse the created order. We who seek to overthrow God’s order for the church, even if it with the best of intentions, are still sons and daughters of Eve. Like their mother, they become transgressors.

Saved Through The Child-birth

This takes us to one of the most difficult verses in the Bible. Let’s read it carefully. “Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and

²⁴ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 215.

holiness, with self-control.” I want to point out here that Paul is actually paralleling in this statement what he said earlier about adornment. Now, one complementarian woman puts it this way as she looks at the structure. Vv. 9-10 dealt with proper adornment for women, while vv. 13-15 verses talk about proper order for women.

- 1a) 1 Tim 2:9-10, **Proper adornment** for women (modesty and good works);
- 1b) 1 Tim 2:11, Let a **woman** learn **in silence** with all submission;
- central axis) 1 Tim 2:12a, I do not permit women to teach or have authority over men;
- 2b) 1 Tim 2:12, Let a **woman** be **in silence**;
- 2a) 1 Tim 2:13-15, **Proper order** for women (men in authority over women).²⁵

This is a good start but does not go far enough. There is a controlling word that ties both parts together: “self-control.” “Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control” (9). “She will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in ... self-control” (15). Seen this way, childbearing is the new adornment for the woman!

Think about how our culture is in a mad rush to obliterate all distinctions between men and women. I mentioned it at the beginning of the sermon. But try as they might, they will never be able to make men give birth to

²⁵ Christine Smith, “1 Timothy 2,” *A Little Perspective* (Sept 26, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/1-timothy-2-2016//>

babies. This is a fundamental biological difference that God simply gave to women and not to men. So, again, what Paul is doing here is bringing up something that is rooted, not in the fall, but in creation.

But what does it mean to be “saved through childbearing?” It can’t mean that a woman has to have a baby to be saved. Many women are saved and never have babies. It doesn’t mean mere physical salvation either, as if Paul is saying that you won’t have die when you give birth to your baby, like so many did in pre-medical times. Didn’t Rachel die in labor? Nor does this mean that somehow childbearing, rather than being a pastor, represents a woman’s true calling and that she is “saved” from seizing masculine roles by being content in her feminine calling to bear children. Paul is not saying, “A woman’s place is in the home,” though, clearly, we have seen the damaging effects on the family of four generations of women now not staying at home.

Salvation here is spiritual. It’s the same thing discussed earlier in the chapter, when Christ was the Savior of all mankind. This obviously includes half of our species—women. Just here, I am convinced of an interpretation that makes sense of the entire context and yet most have never considered it.

It rests on a point of Greek. It literally reads, “But she shall be saved through the child-birth.” THE child-birth. Why is the definite article here? Scholars have proposed that THE here refers to a very specific birth—namely, the birth of Jesus Christ. One poet put it this way.

*A child from woman's seed to spring
Shall saving to all women bring*²⁶

²⁶ **Walter Lock**, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (I & II Timothy and Titus)*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 29. **Going Deeper.** Ryken gives no history of this view other than citing Lock. However, the interpretation goes far back into history. Henry Hammond (1605-60), an English Divine, explains, “The difficulties thus discernible against either of these interpretations make it not unreasonable to pitch upon a third interpretation, so as *teknogonia* shall signify the *woman's bearing of the promised seed*, which was the means foretold for the *bruising the serpents head*, and so for the rescuing the woman from that eternal punishment which was justly deserved by her sin. This is no new interpretation, but so ancient as to be mentioned by *Theophylact*, though not accepted by him, and this perfectly agrees with every circumstance in the Context. For thus it will connect with what went before; *the woman*, that is, *Eve*, v. 12. *being deceived was in the transgression*, that is, was first guilty of eating the forbidden fruit, but rescued from the punishment by the promised seed, that is, *by her child-bearing*, by the *Messias*, which was to be born of a woman, and so to redeem that nature which he assumed; but this not absolutely, but on condition of faith, and charity, and holiness, and sobriety, and continuing in all these: and this advantage belonging not only to the first, woman *Eve*, but to all her posterity, in respect of whom it is that the number is changed from the Singular to the Plural, She, as the representative of all women, had the promise made to her, *Gen. 3. 15.* but the condition must be performed by all others as well as her, or else the benefit will not redound to them.” **Henry Hammond**, *A Paraphrase and annotations upon all the books of the New Testament Briefly Explaining All The Difficult Places Thereof* (London: J. Flesher for Richard David, 1659). <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A45436.0001.001/1:20.2.1?rgn=div3;view=fulltext>.

It was difficult to track down which Theophylact Hammond was talking about, but it seems it was **Theophylact of Ohrid** (circa 1055-1107), a Byzantine archbishop of Ohrid in modern day Macedonia/Greece. In his comments on 1 Timothy 2:15, after giving his own view he writes, “Some, however, it is not known why, childbearing was understood as a birth that was from the Most Holy Theotokos. She, they say, having given birth to the Savior, saved the wives. But understanding is also inconsistent with the speech that follows. For listen...” (Translated from the Russian into English by Google Translate). The Russian text is found here: <http://feofilakt.ru/1e-solunyanam/glava->

This interpretation not only makes sense of the definite article being there, it also makes sense of the **strange shift in the pronoun** from the third person singular “*she* will be saved” to the third person plural “if *they* continue...” Who is “*she*” that will be saved? Pronouns modify the most recent nouns. Eve! How? Through the childbirth! (“They” then refers back to all women.) Is this not the context of **Genesis 3**? Was not the promise given to Eve that her seed could crush the serpent? Jesus’ death on the cross accomplished this feat, legally, and through him (not by her somehow giving birth to children), women (plural) will be saved.

In this way, Paul is actually giving **more praise to women** than to men in our text. For as John Stott says, “**Even if certain roles are not open to women, and even if**

[2#:~:text=%D0%93%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B0%201-%D0%93%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B0,-2](https://womeninthechurch.co.uk/wp-content/plugins/Commentary-on-1-Timothy-2-vv-11-to-15-pre-1918.pdf). Many since Hammond have taken this view. For a short list see **H. D. M. Spence-Jones**, ed., *1 Timothy*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 36. Ellicott in this list can be found here: <https://womeninthechurch.co.uk/wp-content/plugins/Commentary-on-1-Timothy-2-vv-11-to-15-pre-1918.pdf>.

Coupland suggests that this interpretation actually goes back all the way to Irenaeus (130 – 202 AD). He does not give a passage, but it is probable he has this in mind: “**And just as through a disobedient virgin man was stricken down and fell into death, so through the Virgin who was obedient to the Word of God man was reanimated and received life. For the Lord came to seek again the sheep that was lost; and man it was that was lost: and for this cause there was not made some other formation, but in that same which had its descent from Adam He preserved the likeness of the (first) formation. For it was necessary that Adam should be summed up in Christ, that mortality might be swallowed up and overwhelmed by immortality; and Eve summed up in Mary, that a virgin should be a virgin’s intercessor, and by a virgin’s obedience undo and put away the disobedience of a virgin.**” (**Irenaeus**, *Proof of Apostolic Preaching* 33). See **Simon Coupland**, “Salvation Through Childbearing? The Riddle of 1 Timothy 2:15,” *The Expository Times* 112.9 (2001): 302-03. <https://sci-hub.ru/10.1177/001452460111200904>.

they are tempted to resent their position, they and we must never forget what we 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.”²⁷

But how is a woman, any woman, a woman who has babies, a woman who doesn't, a woman who gets married, a woman who doesn't, how is a woman saved? Imagine if Paul was saying that she will be saved from hell by having children. That would be **salvation by works**. But instead, he says that women are saved through the birth of Christ “*if they continue in faith...*” They are saved by faith in Christ. Just like men.

This faith is **accompanied by the godly good works** (see **vs. 9**) of love and holiness and self-control. And that takes us back to the beginning of the command, where he also told them to be self-controlled, modest, godly, submissive. And that in turn takes us back to **the men** who are likewise to be godly as they lead the prayers of the church.

Without question, this passage has made many angry over the last century, and probably before that. That's

²⁷ Stott, in **Ryken**, 105.

ironic, since **anger is the first of the vices** prohibited in it. The church's job is not to follow the cultural whims and be tossed about by its ever changing winds. It is her job to be rooted in biblical truth. This truth is what sets men and women free, freer than any ideology that has ever come down the pike, both spiritually and as people living in this world. **God wants his church to submit to his word**, because he knows what is best for us. He knows how he created us and even if we can't see the dangers, he has warned us about them. God wants his church to exercise biblical order, not because he is a tyrant who hates women, but because he is a loving God who knows that when we follow the dictates of our evil hearts, the only gospel that saves through Jesus Christ is eclipsed by our need to be in charge.

I do not believe that all those who take the egalitarian position are un-saved. We all have bad theology. But I do think that there can be a deep-seated kicking against the goads that is rooted in the hearts of many. I also don't think that men who act like jerks are necessarily unsaved. We are all saved by faith alone in Christ. If you have not trusted in him, come and see the true freedom that comes through submission to the King of kings and learn anew what it

means that he made both male and female in his image, complementary to one another.

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