

AN EXEGESIS OF 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15
What Is The Role Of Women In The Local Church?

This passage is a section of a personal letter from Paul, the aged apostle, to his son in the faith, Timothy. The thrust of the passage is Paul's inspired teaching concerning men and women's roles and conduct within the church. The purpose of this writing is a faithful exegesis of the passage in the English text, using the New King James Version of the Bible. This will be accomplished by setting forth the background, doing a verse-by-verse study, making a theological analysis, and concluding with some practical applications.

BOOK, HISTORICAL, AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The books of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are frequently referred to as the Pastoral Epistles because the teaching in them focuses on sound doctrine, qualifications for leadership within the church, relationships in the church, and the protection of the church from various ungodly influences.¹ Traditionally, the church accepted Pauline authorship of each of these letters. However, critical scholarship, beginning with Schmidt in 1804, has assailed this notion for the past two centuries.² It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider all of the various arguments on the subject. The book claims to be written by the apostle Paul to his "true son in the faith", Timothy (1:1-2), and this writer believes it is a genuine testimony from the hand of an apostle of Jesus Christ rather than some type of pious forgery. Therefore, Pauline authorship is assumed.

The Pastoral Epistles are commonly dated between 63 and 67 A.D. with 63 being a very possible date for the writing of 1 Timothy.³ Liftin gives an excellent summary of the assumed chronology behind this dating. He writes,

Paul's missionary journeys occupied approximately the years A.D. 48-56. From 56-60 Paul was slowly making his way through the Roman courts, arriving ultimately at Rome. For two years, 61-62, Paul was held under house arrest in Rome, at the end of which time, it can be surmised, he was released. From 62-67

¹ W. A. Criswell, ed., The Believer's Study Bible: New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 1715.

² William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary: New Testament (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 886.

³ Criswell, 1715.

Paul traveled more or less freely, subsequently writing each of them a letter. Thus the approximate dates for 1 Timothy and Titus are perhaps 63-66. After being recaptured and once again imprisoned, Paul wrote Timothy a second letter, 2 Timothy. Thus 2 Timothy, dated approximately A.D. 67, represents the last Pauline Epistle.⁴

In 1 Timothy, Paul, the aged apostle of Christ, nearing the end of his earthly life and ministry, is writing to his spiritual son, Timothy, who is overseeing the church at Ephesus. Timothy was a native of Lystra who joined Paul on his second missionary journey.⁵ Timothy's mother was a Jew, and his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, were genuine believers who must have greatly influenced Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5). Apparently, Timothy was relatively young (1 Tim. 4:12). However, he had a good report among the brethren (Acts 16:2), and he came to be a close and trusted associate of Paul. On the other hand, Timothy did have his share of weaknesses. He seemed to "have been by nature somewhat passive, timid, retiring, and easily intimidated," and this forced Paul to repeatedly exhort him into action.⁶ Paul was attempting to pass the torch of the gospel on to Timothy without allowing the flame to be dimmed.

The apostle knew Timothy needed instruction and preparation in order to effectively carry on his ministry in a strategic and difficult location such as Ephesus. Therefore, Paul wrote, "But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15)." This writer believes that the verse just quoted expresses Paul's purpose in writing and serves as the theme verse for the entire letter. Proper conduct in the church, especially among leaders, is essential because the church "is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Paul prepared Timothy for proper conduct in two ways. First, he prepared Timothy on a personal level. Among other things, Paul charge Timothy to "instruct the brethren" (4:6), "reject profane and old wives' fables" (4:7), "be an example" (4:12), "take heed to yourself and to the doctrine" (4:16), "fight the good fight of faith" (6:12), and "guard what was committed to your trust" (6:20). Second, Paul prepared Timothy by

⁴John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament Edition (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983), 729.

⁵Criswell, 1715.

⁶Walvoord and Zuck, 730.

giving instructions about proper order in the church. He did this by warning Timothy about false doctrine (1:3-11), calling the church to prayer (2:1-7), defining roles and conduct of men and women in the church (2:8-15), giving the qualifications for leaders in the church (3:1-13), enlightening Timothy about apostasy (4:1-5), giving instruction about how to relate to various groups within the church (5:1-25), and warning against greed (6:3-10).

The passage being exegeted in this paper, 1 Tim. 2:8-15, is an exhortation concerning order in the church. It focuses on the conduct, roles, and relationships of men and women. In its immediate context, the passage is preceded by Paul's call to prayer on behalf of all people and is followed by a listing of the standards for those holding leadership positions within the church.

VERSE-BY-VERSE STUDY

VERSE 8

Paul expressed his strong desire that men pray everywhere.⁷ However, it is important to remember that Paul's desire really comes from God because he is an apostle speaking under inspiration. The phrase could be understood, then, as being God's desire that men pray everywhere. Based on the context, "everywhere" means "wherever Christian congregations assemble" and "not every place indiscriminately."⁸ In verses one and two, Paul had dealt with the topic of public worship by exhorting Timothy to lead in prayers for everyone. Then, in verses three through seven, Paul digressed and wrote about Christ, the Mediator. According to Wuest, "The word 'therefore' is resumptive, picking up again the general topic of public worship from which Paul digressed in verses 3-7."⁹

Paul not only encouraged men to pray, but he also gave them practical instructions about prayer. He gave them a positive and a negative exhortation. First, Paul encouraged the men to pray, "lifting up holy hands." Praying with raised hands was a common Old

⁷W. E. Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 1981), 299.

⁸Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament: Volume IV (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), 221.

⁹Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest's Word Studies From the Greek New Testament for the English Reader: Volume Two (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 45.

Testament practice that carried over into the early church.¹⁰ This prayer posture is illustrated by paintings on the walls of the Roman catacombs.¹¹ Hendricksen says this method of prayer “is a fit symbol of utter dependence on God and of humble expectancy.”¹² The emphasis is on holiness. In this context it refers to moral purity and emphasizes a life that earnestly desires to please God.¹³

Second, Paul encouraged men to pray “without wrath and doubting.” This is the negative exhortation. “Wrath,” *orge*, means strong anger, and it refers to a settled and ongoing spirit of indignation against another as opposed to *thumos*, which is more akin to a temper tantrum.¹⁴ “Doubting,” *dialogismou*, means “skeptical questionings or criticisms.”¹⁵ The word can picture a question and answer dialogue. Vincent writes, “prayer, according to our writer, is to be without the element of skeptical criticism, whether of God’s character and dealings, or of the character and behavior of those for whom prayer is offered.”¹⁶

VERSES 9-10

The phrase, “in like manner also,” links verses 8 and 9 together, and it shows that “the writer’s thought is still running upon the public assemblies for worship.”¹⁷ However, Paul turns his attention to the matter of proper dress for women involved in public worship. “Women” is plural, and this writer believes it refers to women in general. Paul instructed them to “adorn themselves in modest apparel.” There is a play on words in the Greek text of the preceding phrase. It could be stated, “*kosmio*

¹⁰Walvoord and Zuck, 735.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²William Hendricksen, New Testament Commentary: Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990), 104.

¹³Hayne P. Griffin, Jr. and Thomas D. Lea, The New American Commentary: Volume 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 95.

¹⁴Vine, 55.

¹⁵Vincent, 221

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

themselves in *kosmein* apparel.”¹⁸ The basic noun form of the word, *kosmos*, refers to creation.¹⁹ The basic verb form, *kosmeo*, means to “arrange, to put in order.”²⁰ In other words, the Christian women must arrange themselves in an orderly way that is consistent with their Christian testimonies.²¹

Paul then goes on to tell the women how properly to adorn themselves by giving both positive and negative instructions like he did with the men. The positive instruction is that the women are to adorn themselves “with propriety and moderation.” “Propriety” means an appropriate reserve.²² “Moderation” means a soundness of mind and judgment.²³ Thus, the positive instruction is for women to employ appropriate reserve and sound judgment in their dress. Paul’s negative instruction is that women not adorn themselves with “braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing.” Lea and Griffin write of this phrase, “The prohibition against ‘braided hair’ or expensive jewelry or clothing prohibits a gaudy, showy display, not normal attention to neatness and good taste.”²⁴ The focus of modesty in this particular context is on not flaunting wealth.

Verse 10 begins with the word, “but,” and this word connects the two verses together and also indicates a contrast in thought. According to Vine, proper “means to be conspicuous among a number, to be eminent, distinguished by a thing, hence, to be becoming, seemly, fit.”²⁵ “Profess” means to loudly and clearly proclaim a message.²⁶

¹⁸Barbara Aland and others, eds., The Greek New Testament (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), 716.

¹⁹Wuest, 46.

²⁰Vine, 32.

²¹Wuest, 46.

²²Hendricksen, 106.

²³Vine, 44-5.

²⁴Griffin and Lea, 96.

²⁵Vine, 44-5.

²⁶Hendricksen, 108.

“Godliness” literally means God-fearing.²⁷ “Good works” are activities attempted for the sake of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁸ Therefore, Paul is saying that women who verbally proclaim to fear God should focus on activities for the sake of Jesus instead of their outward appearance. He wants their practice to match up to their profession.

VERSE 11

Paul wrote, “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.” “Learn” means “to increase one’s knowledge.”²⁹ According to Vine, silence “indicates tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance to others.”³⁰ The question concerning this phrase is whether or not total silence or quietness is meant. Liftin writes,

The word, *hesychia*, translated ‘quietness’ in 1 Timothy 2:11 and silent in verse 12, does not mean complete silence or no talking. It is clearly used elsewhere (Acts 22:2; 2 Thes. 3:12) to mean ‘settled down, undisturbed, not unruly.’ A different word (*sigao*) means ‘to be silent, to say nothing’ (cf. Luke 18:39; 1 Cor. 14:34).³¹

Paul also tells the women to be in full submission, but he does not specify who they are to submit to. This writer believes that married women are to be in submission to their husbands, and all church members are to follow the leaders of the church together (Heb. 13:17) as long as those leaders are following Scripture.

VERSES 12-14

“And” connects verse 11 with verse 12. Paul gives two prohibitions in this verse. He did “not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man.” Because “permit” is present tense, Wuest translates, “I do not permit a woman to be a teacher.”³² Because of the context of the public gathering of the church, teaching would have to refer to the teaching of the Word of God. Therefore, this is a prohibition of women teaching men the

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Vine, 231.

²⁹Ibid., 324.

³⁰Ibid., 242.

³¹Walvoord and Zuck, 735.

³²Wuest, 48.

Word of God in public gatherings of the church. Also, Paul did not allow a woman “to have authority over a man.” “Authority” means dominion and refers to a person who moves on his own authority.³³ A woman who attempts to exert authority over a man is acting on her own authority because God has given authority to men in the home and the church. This is clearly the reason that Paul would tell women to be in submission to the men.

Paul then went on in verses 13 and 14 to lay out the reasons for the prohibitions he gave in verse 12. He linked the verses together with the use of “for” at the beginning of verse 13. According to Drumwright, for, *gar*, “is the conjunction that commonly expresses the ground or reason for an action or a statement.”³⁴

Paul gave two reasons for what he wrote in verse 12. The first reason was that “Adam was formed first, then Eve.” This dealt with the fact that Adam was first in the creation because creation is the basic meaning of “formed.” Paul is appealing to the creation account contained within Holy Scripture in order to buttress his position. It is important to note that the headship of the man was ordained by God at creation and before sin came into the world. Thus, male headship is God’s ideal and not a perversion brought about by sin.

Paul’s second reason was the fact that “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” Paul is not being unfair and placing all the blame on Eve because he had already declared Adam’s guilt and responsibility in Rom. 5:12-21. There are two different Greek words used for “deceived” in this verse. The first, pertaining to Adam’s lack of deception, was *epatethe*, and the second, pertaining to Eve’s deception was *exapatetheisa*, which was a strengthened form of the first.³⁵ *Exapatetheisa* “means to thoroughly beguile or deceive wholly.”³⁶ This writer believes Eve was beguiled by the wiles of the Tempter, but Adam, who had been directly instructed by God on the matter, participated in willful disobedience against God’s command (Rom. 5:19) instead of being beguiled by Satan. Adam was following the woman instead of being the leader God wanted him to be, and it got him into serious

³³Vine, 89-90.

³⁴Huber L. Drumwright, Jr., An Introduction to New Testament Greek (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 34-5.

³⁵Aland and others, 716.

³⁶Vine, 279.

trouble. Paul warned Timothy against allowing women to teach or have authority over men because of the pattern God set forth in creation, and then Paul gave the primary example of the problems that arise when this is not followed when he appealed to the Fall.

VERSE 15

Verse 15 is generally considered to be one of the toughest verses in the Bible to interpret. There have been several different interpretations advanced in regard to this verse. First, women are spiritually saved by bearing children.³⁷ Second, women are kept safe physically during childbirth.³⁸ Third, this verse is a reference to salvation through the birth of the Messiah.³⁹ Fourth, women would avoid the errors listed in verses 11-12 by having children.⁴⁰ Fifth, the verse is a reminder that women find true satisfaction from their role in Christian homes.⁴¹

The first interpretation listed above cannot be true because salvation is by grace through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8). In addition, verse 15 clearly pictures a saved woman. The second one is not correct because even Christian women have died during childbirth. The third interpretation, while sounding plausible, is reading into the text. Also, childbearing is plural and does not refer to an individual birth.⁴² The fourth interpretation does not fit because a woman can have children and still refuse to be in submission to her husband. The fifth interpretation seems to fit the context of the passage. Women are to fulfill their God-given role instead of claiming the men's role. The verse is a picture of sanctification, which is one aspect of our salvation. Paul is stressing the importance of childbearing and motherhood, and the reality that God uses childbearing and motherhood in the sanctification of Christian women that He blesses with children.

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

³⁷Griffin and Lea, 102.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

In addition to understanding a passage of Scripture in its immediate context, it is also important to understand a passage of Scripture in the context of the overall teaching of the Bible. Therefore, this section will focus on a comparison between the teachings set forth in 1 Tim. 2:8-15 and teachings in other parts of the Bible on the same subjects.

Verse 8 contains tremendous teaching on prayer that is definitely in line with the rest of the Bible. Paul told men to pray “everywhere.” 1 Thess. 5:17 gives the command to “pray without ceasing.” Paul admonished them to pray with “holy hands.” Psalm 66:18 says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” Paul also encouraged the men to pray “without wrath.” Jesus said, “But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt. 6:15). Also, Paul encouraged them to pray without “doubting.” Jesus taught his disciples that they could move mountains if they had faith as a mustard seed (Mt. 17:20). Therefore, an effective prayer life will be marked by persistent prayer, a confession of sin, an attitude that forgives instead of holding grudges, and faith that God will do what He says He will do.

In regard to the way women should dress, Peter was in total agreement with Paul. Peter wrote, “Do not let your adornment be merely outward-arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel-rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:3-4). There are at least three theological assumptions behind Peter and Paul’s desire for modesty in women’s adornment. First, women should focus on good works and a quiet spirit because “the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Second, women should focus on good works and a quiet spirit, instead of an emulation of the world’s fashions, because Christians should seek to please God rather than men (Gal. 1:10). Third, women should focus on good works and a quiet spirit because focusing on outward appearance shows a lack of proper priorities. Jesus said, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on” (Mt. 6:25).

The concept of female submission taught by Paul in this passage is another concept taught elsewhere in the Bible that is a hotly debated topic. Peter told wives to “be submissive to your own husbands” (1 Peter 3:1). Submission is grounded in the fact “that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). God Himself said to Eve, “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen. 3:16). Pastors are told to have their children in subjection. However, husbands are never told to put their wives in subjection. On the other hand, women are told to be in submission to their husbands at least three times in

the New Testament. Therefore, submission is not to be coerced by husbands, but it is to be done voluntarily by wives out of obedience to God and love for their husbands. The greatest example of voluntary submission was given by the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5-11).

Biblical submission does not imply any inferiority on the part of women. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." This verse clearly demonstrates the complete equality of men and women. However, God has ordained different functions and roles for men and women. He has given men the role of headship (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3, 8-11) and called for women to respond in submission. Once again, this in no way implies any inferiority for women because 1 Cor. 11:3 also says that "the head of Christ is God," and the Bible clearly teaches the equality of the Father and the Son (cf. John 5:16-18). It is also important to be clear that the commands are directed to husbands and wives in particular. Scripture does not teach that women are to submit to men in general.

Another controversial topic in 1 Tim. 2:8-15 is Paul's command to "let a woman learn in silence." In 1 Cor. 14:34, Paul said, "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak." However, 1 Cor. 11:5 speaks of women praying and prophesying. Some people consider these verses to be contradictory, but this writer believes they are actually complementary.

How can these verses be reconciled? The key is to note exactly what each verse is prohibiting or allowing. In 1 Cor. 14:34, Paul uses the word for complete silence, *sigao*, and this verse occurs in the context of guidelines for judging prophetic utterances.. Therefore, it would seem to be a prohibition of women judging these utterances. In 1 Tim. 2:11, Paul wanted women to "learn in silence." Therefore, he is requiring quietness during the time of the teaching of the Word of God. In other words, he is desiring that women be learners instead of teaching men. Neither one of these restrictions is contradictory to the fact that Paul allows women to pray and prophesy.

The Scriptures do not allow women to judge prophetic utterances or have a teaching or authority role over men. Are there other restrictions given to the ministry of women? The pastorate and diaconate are two areas of ministry that many people consider also to be off limits to women. What do the Scriptures actually have to say about them being off limits to women?

It is the opinion of this writer that the Bible clearly precludes women from being pastors. There are several reasons for this. First, pastors are to be followed as leaders of the church with spiritual authority given to them by God (cf. Heb. 13:7, 13 and 1 Peter

5:1-4), and a woman in this role would violate the command in 1 Tim. 2:12 that a woman is not “to have authority over a man.” Second, an integral part of the pastoral ministry is teaching (cf. Eph. 4:11, 1 Tim. 3:2, 2 Tim. 2:24-26), and a woman being in this teaching role would violate 2 Tim. 2:12. Third, there is absolutely no example in the Bible of a woman having this type of role. The twelve apostles appointed by Jesus, other apostles named in the New Testament⁴³, and all named pastors were men. Fourth, women are prevented from being pastors because a pastor must be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2). Some people would contend that this could be translated the wife of one husband or spouse of one spouse. However, the Greek text shows this to be impossible. In Greek, the phrase is *mias gunaikos andra*.⁴⁴ *Andra* is accusative, singular, and masculine.⁴⁵ *Gunaikos* is genitive, singular, and feminine.⁴⁶ *Mias* is a numeral that is genitive, singular, and feminine.⁴⁷ *Mias*, one, and *gunaikos*, wife, are in agreement so the only possible translation is “husband of one wife” or “man of one woman.” Fifth, a requirement to be a pastor is for a man to rule his own house well. 1 Tim 3:4-5 says that a pastor is to be “one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?).” There is a connection between men leading in the home and men being pastors who lead the church. Of course, just being male does not qualify a man to be a pastor, but he must meet the character requirements elucidated in Scripture.

The question of whether or not women are allowed to be deacons is a much tougher question. There are valid arguments on both sides of the issue. In favor of ordaining women as deacons, it can be said that the diaconate is a role of service and not a ruling/teaching role. Second, Rom. 16:1 refers to Phoebe as “a servant (*diakonon*) of the church in Cenchrea,” and *diakonon* can (but does not have to be) be translated as deacon or deaconess.⁴⁸ Third, in 1 Timothy 3, qualifications are given for pastors and

⁴³ Many Bible scholars cite Julia (Romans 16:7) as an exception to this. This writer does not agree with that conclusion. Please see Wayne Grudem and John Piper’s detailed explanation of this issue on pages 79-81 of *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*.

⁴⁴ Aland and others, 716

⁴⁵ Wesley J. Perschbacher, ed., *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 26.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 84

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁴⁸ Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 414.

deacons. No qualifications are listed for pastor's wives, but qualifications are listed for women (either deacon's wives or deaconesses depending on the translation) within the qualifications for deacons. Kenneth Wuest, in his *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, writes, "Here it should be translated 'women.' It does not necessarily refer to the wives of the deacons, and for the following reasons; first, the words, 'even so,' are the translation of *hosautos*, which is used in introducing the second or third in a series. The series here is of Church officials; second, there is no possessive pronoun in the Greek, which would be needed if the women were the wives of the deacons; third; the four qualifications which follow correspond, with appropriate variations, to the first four required of deacons as regards demeanor, government of the tongue, use of wine, and trustworthiness; and fourth, this is a section dealing wholly with Church officials. The reference here is to women who hold the office of deaconess, as Phoebe (Rom. 16:1). Fourth, the fact that "wives" (1 Tim. 3:11) is not preceded by a pronoun in the Greek text means that the proper translation could be women instead of wives.⁴⁹ If this is the case, the Bible does allow women to be deaconesses.

On the other hand, a case can also be made against women being ordained as deacons. First, some would contend that the seven ordained in Acts 6 were the first deacons and all were all men. Second, *diakonon* in Rom.16:1 and *gunaikas* in 1 Tim. 3:11 could also be translated servant and wives, respectively.⁵⁰ Third, 1 Tim. 3:12 says, "Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." Fourth, just as there is no pronoun before "wives" in the Greek text of 1 Tim. 3:11, there is also no pronoun before "children" in verse 12. However, it is clear that their children are being referred to so verse 11 could also mean their wives. Fifth, the ecclesiastical term for deaconess is *diakonissa*, and the term is not used here or anywhere else in the Bible.⁵¹ Sixth, deacons are clearly referred to on both sides of verse eleven, which would seem to point towards men being deacons.

This question is definitely a gray area that does not call for dogmatism. Evangelical Bible scholars are split regarding their understanding of this passage. This writer sees how it could be viewed either way. However, this writer feels that the arguments listed above, particularly Wuest's explanation, for women being deacons are a

⁴⁹John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Shepherdology: A Master Plan for Church Leadership* (Panorama City, California: The Master's Fellowship, 1989), 183.

⁵⁰Aland and others, 563 and 717.

⁵¹Archer, 414.

little bit stronger. If a church does have women as deacons, their ministries should be limited to service (as should the ministry of male deacons as well).

Another issue that should be considered is the application of the admonition for women not to teach men in 1 Timothy 2:12. Is this absolute or limited? Wayne Grudem and John Piper write of this, “When Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:12, ‘I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent,’ we do not understand him to mean an absolute prohibition of all teaching by women. Paul instructs the older women to ‘teach what is good. They they can train the younger women’ (Titus 2:3-4), and commends the teaching that Eunice and Lois gave to their son and grandson Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14). Proverbs praises the ideal wife because ‘She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue’ (Proverbs 31:26). Paul endorses women prophesying in church (1 Corinthians 11:5) and says that men ‘learn’ by such prophesying (1 Corinthians 14:31) and that the members (presumably men and women) should ‘teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs’ (Colossians 3:16). Then, of course, there is Priscilla at Aquila’s side correcting Apollos (Acts 18:26). It is arbitrary to think that Paul had every form of teaching in mind in 1 Timothy 2:12. Teaching and learning are such broad terms that it is impossible that women not teach men and men not learn from women in some sense. There is a way that nature teaches (1 Corinthians 11:14) and a fig tree teaches (Matthew 24:32) and suffering teaches (Hebrews 5:8) and human behavior teaches (1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Peter 3:1). If Paul did not have every conceivable form of teaching and learning in mind, what did he mean? Along with the fact that the setting here is the church assembled for prayer and teaching (1 Timothy 2:8-10; 3:15), the best clue is the coupling of ‘teaching’ with ‘having authority over men.’ We would say that the teaching inappropriate for a woman is the teaching of men in settings or ways that dishonor the calling of men to bear the primary responsibility for teaching and leadership. This primary responsibility is to be carried by the pastors and elders. Therefore we think it is God’s will that only men bear the responsibility for this office.”⁵² This writer believes this prevents a woman from being a pastor/elder, preaching in the worship service of a local church gathered, and teaching men as the primary teacher in mixed classes (while not preventing them from sharing and contributing). Some complementarian churches limit this to worship services and allow women to teach mixed classes outside of the worship service. It does not apply outside of the church in personal interaction (such as conversation or counseling) even within the church, or in family settings.

⁵²John Piper and Wayne Grudem, ed. Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood (Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway, 2006), 69-70).

Paul places some limitations on the ministry of women in the church. However, many people, for various reasons, do not consider his instructions to be binding on us today. It is very important to consider some of these arguments.

There are four main arguments. First, it is sometimes argued that according to Gal. 3:28, there is no male/female distinction in Christ. The verse says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This argument ignores the fact that the context of the chapter is salvation through faith alone, and this verse is referring to the fact that anyone can be a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Also, the roles assigned by God in creation are not abolished by the Christ who completely fulfilled the Old Testament. Furthermore, Paul is not so foolish that he would have a contradiction between Galatians and 1 Timothy.

Second, it is often argued that Paul’s teaching about a woman’s function is not applicable today because he was only addressing specific problems in the churches to which he was writing. However, Paul’s appeal to Creation and the Fall means that his teaching is timeless and not just limited to a specific situation. Also, he clearly listed the reasons for what he wrote, and they were the creation order and Eve’s role in the fall as opposed to listing specific problems at Ephesus (cf. Phil. 4:2-3 where Paul does deal with a specific problem involving two women). In 1 Corinthians 11:3, he used the Trinity as an example of what he was teaching. A common pushback to this line of argument is that it is inconsistent to consider the teaching about women teaching and leading to be timeless but the teaching about women and head coverings to be cultural and only applicable to the first century. However, complementarians believe that the principle taught in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is timeless (and actually the same as has been espoused throughout this paper), but the head coverings were an outward expression that was a temporary cultural expression (although there is nothing wrong with women applying this and wearing some form of them in church today). It is outside the scope of this paper to explore this topic in detail, but consider what Thomas Schreiner said about it. He wrote, “Am I suggesting that women return to wearing coverings or veils? No. We must distinguish between the fundamental principle that underlies a text and the application of that principle in a specific culture. The fundamental principle is that the sexes, although equal, are also different. God has ordained that men have the responsibility to lead, while women have a complementary and supportive role...Now, in the first century, failure to wear a covering sent a signal to the congregation that a woman was rejecting the authority of male leadership. Paul was concerned about head coverings only because of the message they sent to people in that culture. Today, except in certain religious groups,

if a woman fails to wear a head covering while praying or prophesying, no one thinks she is in rebellion. Lack of head coverings sends no message at all in our culture.”⁵³

Third, some people argue that Biblical teachings about such issues as slavery must also be applicable today if the teachings about women are applicable. However, slavery was not ordained by God, and the teachings were temporary regulations of a man-made institution. In fact, the application of Biblical principles has led to the abolition of slavery in many places. On the other hand, the role of women was ordained by God Himself. Their role is the product of creation and not culture as demonstrated above.

Fourth, there are those who contend that Paul was a chauvinist who was reflecting the cultural bias of his day against women. To be logically consistent in making an argument, it is necessary to take the argument out to its logical conclusion. What is the logical conclusion of this argument? If this argument is true, it means that Paul was a liar because he claimed that his gospel “came through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:12). It would also mean that Paul was a hypocrite because he told Christians to “not be conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2) when he was conforming to the ideas of his culture. It would also mean that the Bible is a fraud because Paul claimed that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Furthermore, it is actually even wrong to assume that Paul was conforming to his culture in his views on this subject. Clinton Arnold has written, “It is crucial to recognize that this passage [he is referring to Ephesians 5:21-33 and the command for wives to submit to husbands] does not represent a cultural concession to the prevailing forms of patriarchy in Roman households (as a number of modern commentators assume). This passage is countercultural at its core. Paul sets Christ as the example for both wives and husbands, but in particular the husband, as he seeks to understand how he is to exert his leadership and authority in the home. The pattern Paul provides completely redefines what every first-century man in the church would have assumed as important in their role as husband. They are no longer to look at the heavy-handed, oppressive ways that their father and grandfathers ruled in their homes. Rather, they must now look to Christ to see what it truly means to be a leader.”⁵⁴

Despite the fact that their role is limited in some areas, women do have a major role to play within the church. This role includes: prayer and prophecy (1 Cor. 11:5), teaching other women (Titus 2:4), giving personal counsel and instruction (Acts 18:26), sharing a testimony (John 4:28-29), witnessing about Christ (Mt. 28:7), hospitality (Acts 12:12), service (Rom. 16:1-2), and really anything else not forbidden to them by

⁵³ Ibid, 138.

⁵⁴ Clinton Arnold, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians (Zondervan, 2010), 380.

Scripture, which includes a multitude of ministries.⁵⁵ Furthermore, there is no greater ministry than the ministry of motherhood.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

⁵⁵Criswell, 1718.

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This passage speaks to Christians' lives in at least four major areas: acceptance of the Bible as the authority for our lives, our walks with God, our marital relationships, and order within our churches. First, the Bible must be the authority for our lives. The rise and influence of humanism and feminism has caused many who profess faith in Christ to shrink away from the Biblical position on the issues dealt with in this paper. However, the true Christian must realize God is the only source of truth and make a commitment to believe, study, obey, and stand for God's Word even when that results in an uncomfortable and unpopular position. We are called to please God rather than men.

Second, this passage deals with our personal walks with God through the teachings on prayer and women's adornment. Men are told to make consistent, believing prayer from a pure heart that does not harbor any unforgiveness a priority in their lives. Women should focus on their inner qualities and doing good works instead of attempting to keep up with the latest fashion trend.

Third, this passage contains teaching that should affect our marital relationships. Wives are to be in submission to their husbands. Of course, husbands are to love their wives like Christ loves the church (Eph 5:25) and lead in a godly way.

Forth, this passage definitely contains teaching that should affect the way we conduct ourselves in church. Just imagine what "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), would be like if holy men gave prayerful teaching and leadership, and the women followed them in humble submission. The church would be dramatically changed and would be much more like God wants it to be.

ENDNOTES