

1 Timothy 2:1-8

Instructions to Timothy

Fight, Keep Fighting, Finish!

What About Women?!



Women are the backbone of the church and of the Kingdom of God! I am going to say that right at the top! Without their love of Jesus and their passion for service to Him, the church could not function! It was women who accompanied Jesus as he made His way down from Galilee to Jerusalem to His appointment with the cross. They ministered humbly and faithfully to His needs and the needs of His disciples on the journey. We can assume they prepared food for them, and kept their garments in decent repair. They were the ones that kept vigil at the cross, and as they made their way to the tomb to administer spices to the body of Jesus, they were the ones the angels at the grave announced that “**He is not here! He is risen!**” Even today, women carry on with the things that need to be done at church. Every act of service to Christ is important in strengthening the church and propelling its mission forward! If the teaching and worship are stellar, but the lawn is long and weedy, and the paint is peeling, and the toilets don’t work – that is a church in trouble! When God calls us to serve and contribute to His work in and through the church with our abilities/gifts and experience in a big way or small, we have to view it as our chance – our opportunity! Women are good at that! They find it hard, not easy, to say “no” when there is a need and a call for service in the church. God bless them for that! They often take on more than they should!



The evolution of human rights that has been very slow to develop over the course of human history. But what seems to make so much sense to us now, is actually a very new way of looking at things in the scope of history. We cannot unjustly judge the N.T. scriptures, written two thousand years ago, with a 21st century eye and sense of morality! Those that do, do so in ignorance, arrogance, and just a superior sense of morality – to the Bible no less! It is the height of human arrogance and stupidity to think we see things more clearly than the infinitely righteous Creator/God! Many of you have told me that you sympathized with me having to preach and teach on this particular text this week. In this day and age of outraged, deeply offended, and hate-fueled people zealots, the topic of the role of women in the church is a minefield! One misstep and it could blow up in my face! I accept that, and I don't really care, to tell you the truth. I can only share with you what I think is the right thought process on the matter, and the right course of action. I have no problem with saying that I could be wrong. Bible-believing churches are all over the map on this one – so somebody has to be wrong! But I will give my thoughts on the matter without a qualm, because, of course, I think I am right. If I offend, I do not mean to, but that does not mean I am automatically sorry. Your offense may not be legitimate, and I cannot apologize for saying or doing the right thing. But offense probably cannot be avoided in this case, even though I consider myself middle of the road. People on one extreme or the other will find that middle of the road *in itself* is offensive! I just know that I cannot please everyone. Yet, this is an important topic and we ought to be able to talk about it.



The first part of our texts, vss. 9,10, I don't think anyone who is in Christ has a problem with. Some of the wealthier women in the Ephesian church were trying to impress others with the excessive wearing of jewelry and the latest fashions in clothing and hair. Paul just points out that this is not impressive at all! It just doesn't cut it in the church, or at least it shouldn't! Christ-followers should be impressed with only what God is impressed with. [1 Samuel 16:7]. He looks on the inside of a person and is impressed when we have a tender heart that can be touched and motivated to action by the needs of others. Then the issue of modesty. No one I know, man or woman, who is a Christ-follower, will argue that women or men should have the **right** to dress *immodestly*! No one wants that! At any rate, it is obvious when a woman is advertising herself to men by accentuating/revealing the more female parts of her body, and we simply don't want that in the church! Since men are visually stimulated, they are involved in a perpetual struggle to follow Christ and to keep their eyes on Him in this area! It is a very powerful male drive and very hard, (but not impossible) to overcome! Men don't need their eyes tempted in the church. They get enough of that outside the church! I just have to mention here that dressing immodestly is also a nasty way for a woman to advertise her competitiveness with other women! As many women notice immodest attire as men do, and do not like it! But I think we are all in agreement on this. Women, and certainly Christ-following women, should dress modestly **according to current standards**, not just at church, but at all times!

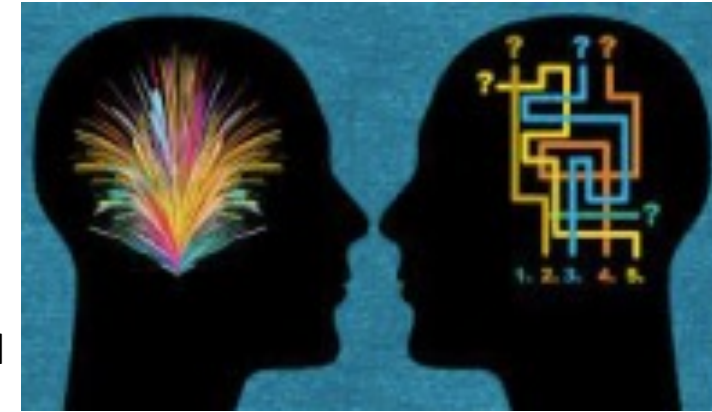


But then we have verse 11, that states that a woman should learn in quietness and full submission. That almost goes without saying! **Everyone** should learn with quietness and submission from someone who is teaching the Bible. This is simply saying that women should not be boisterous and interruptive when the teaching of the scriptures was going on. This evidently had been happening in the church. Women were feeling their oats, because their status had been greatly elevated by Christ in the early church. Christ elevates all who come to Him! We who have given ourselves to Him are princes and princesses, sons and daughters of The King! So, evidently, some women had taken their new status and misused it to become loud and probably even argumentative. They also were impulsively interrupting the church's meetings for spontaneous speaking of "tongues" and prophecies. It got them the focus of attention they had never before had, and that is a human impulse that is a great need for some people – men or women, and especially children! Paul must have seen that it was a particular problem with women in certain churches, and he is trying to put the ki-bosh (as they say) on it in this passage. He wanted order, not disorder and certainly not chaos, in the practice of worship!

I do not think that an analysis of the rest of this text is difficult - and I will say what I think Paul is getting at and why, without apology. In **vs 9-15**, Paul is arguing for the proper roles of men and women - in the church and at home! The separate roles of men and women were thought by everyone to be defined by nature, and therefore by God. What Paul set forth here was “proper” thought regarding women in that time and place, because of the male dominated cultures of Paul’s day! *Even women* had no qualms about Paul’s words. Few, if any, argued against the cultural norms of the day where they lived. Right or wrong, this was “normal”. Paul does not argue from culture, however. He argues from the creation story and from a woman’s unique **physical/emotional/mental** capabilities that, it was thought, made them better at one thing than another. What Paul probably did not have at that time is an understanding of the intellectual capabilities of women! There would have been few women that Paul had ever met that would have had any decent kind of education. It just wasn’t done. It wasn’t proper! There was also a male bias that girls and women either couldn’t learn like boys and men could, or they *didn’t need to*, since the first 10 to 20 years of their adulthood would be completely taken up by having babies and taking care of them. There was no birth control in those days, so women had babies, and more babies! But, of course, it was a mistake and miscalculation of the ancient cultures to underestimate what a woman could do! It was the biggest urban myth of all time and it prevailed across the face of the earth from the beginning until the last couple of centuries – maybe more like the last century and a half! That myth has been completely dispelled that women are not as intelligent as men. Today they are doctors, including brain surgeons, and they are lawyers, scientific researchers, and teachers, and astronomers, etc. They have certainly proven themselves to **not be** intellectually limited by their sex! And, the Olympic competitions of the last 120 years could, alone, prove that women are not weak physically either! Their exploits are absolutely amazing!



But, again, what Paul brings up is not an argument over intelligence, but the story of the fall in Eden. The issues of authority and submission have something to do with creation, so Paul's first point is that 1st of all, was simply that Adam was created first. The concept of the firstborn ran strong in those cultures and was codified in the law of Moses (**Deut. 21:15-17**). It has continued in western societies up until quite recently. There is no question in my mind that Paul is equating the order of creation to the ancient practice of the birthright. The oldest son became the head of the family, when the father died. It was through the eldest sons that the genealogies were recorded for posterity! So, Paul is saying that the headship of the male of the species is rooted in the birthright – Adam was created first. The birthright to Paul, was the natural order of things. Now – I doubt if any of us understand Paul's birthright argument. This cultural rule is not imbedded in the mindset today, and it doesn't seem "natural" at all us! In fact it seems problematic because no sibling **today** would take anything less than a fair and equal distribution of their parents inheritance! But even then it had to have created trouble between siblings – a lot of trouble! *Think of Jacob and Esau! And David's sons fighting for the right to take over his throne! I just don't think that titanic struggle over the birthright was an isolated occurrence! We will not be going back to the birthright system ever again. And we will never again be going back to women being relegated to the singular role of motherhood. That ship has sailed. Couples today can, through birth control, plan their families – when and how many. So women have careers, and jobs, and they contribute to society in more ways than just the all-important role of motherhood! But, still, we cannot just write off this birthright argument. It made complete sense to Paul and his contemporaries!



The second argument Paul uses is taken from Gen. 3 – the story of the temptation and the fall of humanity. Paul says that male headship also originates from the fact that Eve was deceived when she sinned. And she surely was! Paul doesn't mention that Adam was not deceived but **knew** what he was doing when he chose his woman over God and defied Him! Which one is actually worse? Paul may be referring to the thinking of Jewish culture that women were more easily deceived, either because they were thought to be more simple-minded because of no education, or, because they were more emotional, and emotional rather than cold logic could sway the female of the species more than men. This is a dangerous thing and we are seeing emotional argumentation taking over our society to its detriment and perhaps demise! By the way, emotional arguments, without an accompanying logical argument to back it up, are almost always an attempt to deceive. They go to an emotional appeal simply because a logical/rational argument cannot be made! So, emotional manipulation is the go-to technic of the dishonest or the misguided. I think it is interesting, and very telling, that many of the political arguments being made today are being driven by women politicians – gun control, abortion rights, critical race theory, gay rights, etc..., etc..., and the driving force of most of these movements is emotional, not rational/logical!

So perhaps this is what Paul is referring to. If emotional arguments appeal more to women, perhaps they would not be the best ones in charge, and that would apply to men too who operate and make decisions on emotions. But Paul is also issuing instructions to men and women not to fight the cultural norms of that time and place. It was not necessarily a spiritual instruction, but one that kept the prevailing social/cultural order of things. But I can say here that I cannot be sure. It is what I **think** was going on in this passage, but I could be wrong. But the bottom line is that I don't feel that we have the authority to change the scriptures! We know that some of these instruction in Paul's letters are cultural – such as the instructions for women to cover their heads to show authority and for men to uncover their heads (when they pray) to show headship under God's headship. There were legitimate cultural reasons for this. But we must be very careful about messing with scripture these days. Rewriting scripture is being done with impunity these days by people that I used to consider my brothers and sisters in Christ! "Hell is not eternal." "You can be both Christian and practice fornication or a gay lifestyle". "Whiteness is inherently worse than other colors of people". "Sexism exists in the Bible and must be '*adjusted*' to fit current moral standards"! I feel for these people when they have to go before the throne of God. They have much to answer for!



Actually, there is no question that sexism is a real thing! Some men who want to assert "*God-given*" male dominance over their women, will misuse passages such as this one to support their selfish and destructive need to put themselves first in their home. I cannot think of anything less Christ-honoring. I would argue that that is no longer a cultural norm, and more importantly, neither is it **healthy** for a marriage and home. Women accepted these conditions in Paul's day because it was all there was. But women today do not have to accept these conditions. They are educated, and have opinions that they have just as much right to express as their husbands do! Women need to have half ownership in the decisions of the family or, in this day and age, she will feel marginalized and discontent – and rightly so. Men, if you cannot convince your wife to come to your way of thinking, then back off! Having everything go your way causes resentment and creates fertile ground for the erosion of respect. There is little love where there is no respect between the sexes, and love is the richest endowment of a marriage! To sabotage love because of a burning need to get one's own way without any resistance from one's spouse, is displaying a serious mental problem if you ask me! Self-centeredness is the root of all sin! If a man has a problem with selfishness in his marriage, forcing his will upon his wife while she resents him for doing so, he literally risks becoming a monster, filled with quite transparent hypocrisies and inconsistencies that will render him and insufferable bore to his wife! And I warn you, women - the woman who lets her man walk all over her in the short run without protest or strong resistance is creating a monster in the long run!