

CAN WOMEN SERVE AS PASTORS?

An Exposition of 1 Timothy 2:11-15
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INTRODUCTION

The question of whether or not women are permitted by Scripture to serve in the office of pastor is deeply controversial in the church today. In a culture that has been deeply influenced by post-modernism, feminism, and intersectionality, the idea that women would be excluded from serving in an office of church leadership is extremely offensive to many people. However, I am convinced that Scripture is clear on this issue, and that living in obedience to God's Word is the way that men and women will truly flourish as they serve in their God-ordained roles. The thesis of this essay is this: *God has ordained that only men may serve in the office of pastor as is clearly articulated in 1st Timothy 2:11-15.* In this essay, I will provide an exposition of 1st Timothy 2:11-15, respond to objections by those who hold opposing views, and provide application for the church today.

EXPOSITION OF 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15

CONTEXT OF 1 TIMOTHY

First Timothy is a personal letter written by the Apostle Paul to "Timothy, my true child in the faith" (1Tim 1:2). Timothy was Paul's protégé and partner on his missionary journeys. Timothy was sent to Ephesus by Paul "so that [he] may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine" (1 Tim 1:3). This letter was likely written at some point in the mid-60's A.D., following Paul's first imprisonment which was between A.D. 60-62 and prior to Paul being executed by Nero around A.D. 68. The purpose of this letter, according to George Knight, is that Paul "seeks to encourage Timothy in regard to his responsibility over against the false teaching and his responsibility as the church's leader/teacher."¹ With this context in mind, Paul begins to give Timothy instructions for how the church is to operate in chapter 2, addressing the church's worship, leadership, polity, and function in the world. It is in this section that Paul addresses the issue of women in church leadership.

COMMENTARY ON 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15

Paul begins this section in verse 8 by giving instructions for how men are to pray in corporate worship. This is followed by instructions for how women are to adorn themselves when the church is gathered. After this, Paul begins his exhortation to women with regard to their function in the church, by saying, "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness" (1 Tim 2:11). It is significant that Paul tells Timothy to "let a woman learn." Although women participated in worship services in the Old Testament (Nehemiah 8:2), many Jews did not encourage women to learn in the context of public worship. However, this is not Paul's main point in this verse. Paul is concerned with the manner in which a woman is to learn. She is to learn "quietly." Interpreters differ over whether this should be understood as a "quiet demeanor" or "silent." The question is, is the woman to be totally silent during corporate worship, or is the woman to learn with a quiet attitude? John MacArthur favors the former position and writes in his commentary on 1st Timothy that

“women are to be silent and content in the role of the learner.”² William Mounce, in his commentary on 1st Timothy, favors the translation, “quiet demeanor.”

He writes,

Several considerations favor the translation “quiet demeanor,” “quietness” in v 11. (1) 1 Cor. 11:5 secures a vocal role for women in the public worship service. (1 Cor. 14:34-35 prohibits a certain type of speech, perhaps the authoritative evaluation of a prophet’s message. Otherwise Paul would contradict himself within the space of four chapters.). . . In Paul’s two other uses it means “quietness” (1 Thess. 4:11, 2 Thess 3:12).³

I agree with Mounce. I do not believe that Paul is totally banning women from speaking in corporate worship, but rather is addressing the attitude or demeanor that women should have when learning in corporate worship. It is to be a quiet humility that is submissive to the leaders of the church.

Paul then writes, ““I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet” (1st Tim 2:12). In this verse, Paul gives two prohibitions. First, women are not to “teach.” Second, they are not to “exercise authority over a man.” Paul uses his apostolic authority to say that he does “not permit” these things to take place. Some have suggested that Paul’s use of the present tense when saying, “I do not permit,” means that Paul simply meant that *at that time or in that particular situation* Paul was not permitting women to teach or exercise authority. However, the simple use of the present tense here is not sufficient to determine whether or not these prohibitions are temporary. Romans 12:1 begins with the same present tense language, and it is highly unlikely that anyone would argue that only the Roman Christians had to present their bodies as living sacrifices. The same word that is translated “permit” is also used in 1st Corinthians 16:7 of God. “I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord *permits*.” Clearly, the word “permit” is not mere advice. It comes with the full weight of inspired, apostolic authority. Therefore, the question of whether this prohibition is universal or restricted in its application to the particular situation in Ephesus cannot be determined on the basis of the present tense use of “permit.” The context of the passage as a whole is what determines whether or not these prohibitions are universal or temporal.

Paul does not permit a woman to “teach.” However, women clearly “teach” in other passages of Scripture. Both Priscilla and Aquilla taught Apollos (Acts 18:26). In the pastoral epistles themselves, Paul mentioned how Timothy’s mother and grandmother probably taught him the Scriptures (2nd Timothy 1:5 cf. 2nd Timothy 3:14-15). Paul tells Titus that women are to teach other women (Titus 2:3-4). Nevertheless, according to Douglas Moo, “In the pastoral epistles, teaching always has this restricted sense of authoritative doctrinal instruction.”⁴ Overseers are to be “able to teach” (1st Timothy 3:2). Timothy is to “command and *teach* these things” and to devote himself to “the public reading of Scripture, exhortation, and *teaching*” (1st Timothy 4:11,13). Paul solemnly charges Timothy to “preach

¹ George W. Knight. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992. 10.

² John MacArthur. *1 Timothy*. Moody Press, 1995. 85.

³ William D. Mounce. *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*. Zondervan, 2000. 118-119.

⁴ Douglas Moo, “What Does it Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?” in Piper, John, and Wayne Grudem. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Crossway, 2012. 185.

the word,” and contrasts that with a coming time when people will not endure sound *teaching* (2nd Timothy 4:1-3). Therefore, I do not take this verse to be a prohibition against women ever teaching *in any context*, but a prohibition against women authoritatively teaching the church in corporate worship.

Next, Paul does not permit a woman to “exercise authority over a man” (*authentein*). This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament, which makes it difficult to translate. Some have suggested that what Paul has in view here is a particular type of authority that is domineering and harsh, not any and all kinds of authority. A study of extrabiblical uses of *authentein*, according to John Macarthur, “makes clear that the word means simply authority. It carries no negative connotation, such as abusive or domineering authority.”⁵ Therefore, what Paul is prohibiting in this context is that women should be in a position or office of authority over men in the local church. The next chapter makes it clear that the authoritative office in the local church is the office of elder. For this reason, I believe that this verse teaches that women are restricted from holding the office of elder in the local church. This does not mean that women cannot hold any offices or staff positions in the local church, but simply that they are not to be in a position of spiritual authority over men in the church. The basic message of the two prohibitions is this: Women are not to fill the office of elder (authoritative teacher) or perform the function of the elder (authoritative teaching).

Paul gives the reason for his prohibition in the following verses: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:13-14). The word “for” signifies the relationship between verse 13 and what preceded it. This word “for” is the *connective* in this passage. According to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, “Connectives occur at the beginning of sentences to link them with what precedes and within sentences to indicate the relationship between the words, phrases, and clauses through which ideas are conveyed.” According to the authors, the word “for” is a logical connective that gives a reason for preceding statements. This shows that the two prohibitions of verse 12 are *based on* what follows. This means that verses 13-14 are Paul’s *reason* for saying what he said in verses 11-12. This is incredibly significant for the debate over women pastors for this reason: any reason supplied by interpreters for the prohibition against women teaching and having authority that does not line up with what Paul says in verses 13-14 *cannot* be a valid interpretation of this passage. This truly is the key for understanding 1st Timothy 2:11-12. Any reason given for Paul’s prohibition of women teaching and exercising authority over men that does not account for Paul’s own reasons given in verses 13-14 *cannot* be valid. We do not have the liberty to supply our own reasons for these prohibitions.

The prohibitions given by the Apostle in verse 12 are grounded in the order of creation. Men are to lead in the church because “Adam was formed first.” Paul appeals to the order of creation in 1st Corinthians 11:8 when he wrote, “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.” It is clear that Paul sees the order of creation, with man being created first and the woman being created second to be his helper, as the basis for male leadership in the church and in the home. Paul does not list a particular heresy, cultural situation, or educational

⁵John Macarthur. *1 Timothy*. Moody Press, 1995. 87.

⁶William W. Klein, et al. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. 3rd ed., Zondervan, 2017. 357-358.

status as the basis for the prohibitions in verse 12. Paul appeals to the order of creation. As we will see in the course of this essay, Scripture regularly points to the created order of pre-fall humanity as normative for how God designed humanity to function.

Verse 14 moves from the order of creation to the fall of mankind into sin. Paul wrote that “Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” This verse is interesting because Paul elsewhere holds Adam responsible for the first sin of mankind without mentioning Eve (Romans 5:12-21). Paul isn’t suddenly blaming the fall on Eve; rather, he is pointing to her specific role in the fall. She was “deceived.” Adam’s sin was willful disobedience. Eve’s being deceived is the reason why Paul will not allow women to teach or exercise authority over men. Interpreters differ on the relationship between Eve’s deception and Paul’s prohibition.

Some interpreters believe that Paul is teaching that, because Eve was deceived by the serpent in the garden, women are by nature more likely to be deceived than men. Women are more gullible and susceptible to compromising with false teaching. For this reason, Paul will not allow them to teach or exercise authority over men. The issue is ultimately *ontological*. Women, according to this interpretation, are by nature more vulnerable to false teaching than men, and therefore should not be leaders in the church.

Others believe that the issue is not ontological but *functional*. Eve was deceived because, in Genesis 3:1-7, she failed to perform the function or role that God had given her. Adam failed to lead her by protecting her from the deception of the serpent, and she assumed the role of leadership, even though it was not hers to assume. Eve was deceived because she was in a position that she was never intended to be in in the first place. It is likely that the serpent, in addressing Eve instead of Adam with his temptations, purposefully reversed God’s created order of headship and submission. I believe that the functional view fits the context of this passage best. First, this passage is primarily about the roles of men and women in the church, not their nature. Second, the Bible has a great deal to say about men being vulnerable to false teaching and being deceived by it as well, so it wouldn’t make sense for Paul to base his prohibition of women teaching by saying that women are more gullible than men. Third, it must be remembered that Paul is specifically prohibiting women from teaching men. Women are encouraged to teach other women (Titus 2:3-4). If Paul’s concern is that the vulnerable women will teach the men false doctrine, wouldn’t he also be concerned that they would teach it to the women as well? If vulnerability to believing and teaching false doctrine was the issue, Paul wouldn’t have restricted his prohibition to just teaching men. Therefore, Paul is prohibiting women from leadership and authoritative teaching of men in the church because God’s design for men and women includes male headship and female submission in the church and in the home. This is made clear by the appeal to the order of creation and verse 13, and verse 14 is an illustration of what happens when the roles are reversed.

Verse 15 concludes this section of the epistle when it says, “Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control” (1 Tim 2:15). On the face of it, this verse seems to contradict the Pauline teaching of salvation by grace through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, the

word “saved,” according to John Macarthur, “can also mean ‘to rescue,’ to preserve safe and unharmed,’ to heal,’ ‘to set free,’ or ‘to deliver from.’ It appears a number of times in the New Testament without reference to spiritual salvation.” This verse is not teaching that women are eternally saved by having children. When this verse is understood in light of what has come before it, it makes sense. Women are “saved” from the deception of trying to usurp the role that God ordained for men by living out the role that God has designed for them (i.e. childbearing). Women are to be content with the role that God has given them by having children and caring for them. They are to do this “in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” In verse 15, Paul highlights the positive side of the equation. In verse 12 he says what women are not to do, and in verse 15 he says what women are to do.

UNIVERSAL OR RESTRICTED?

In light of the exegesis of 1st Timothy 2:11-15, interpreters must determine whether or not the prohibitions of this verse against women teaching and exercising authority in the church apply to believers in every generation. In other words, are these prohibitions universal or are they restricted to the local situation in Ephesus? My position is that these prohibitions are universal in their application because they are grounded in the created order and in the reality of the fall. In this section, I will defend my view on why I believe these prohibitions are *universal*, as well as respond to four common arguments used by egalitarians to argue for their position.

THE CREATED ORDER

The rest of Scripture treats the pre-fall humanity as the paradigm for what humanity is supposed to be. When Jesus was asked a question about divorce in Matthew 19:1-9, he appealed to Genesis 2:24 as the standard of what marriage is supposed to be. This shows that, according to Jesus, God’s original design of men and women in creation is *how God intended humanity to function*. Therefore, because there is a functional order and headship within creation itself, commands in Scripture that are grounded in the created order cannot be limited in their application to cultural or unique redemptive-historical circumstances. They are to be taken as universal, because God always intends men and women to function in the way that He made them.

The Apostle Paul appeals to the created order in many places in his writings. He clearly teaches the headship of Adam over the human race in contrast to the headship of Christ over His people in Romans 5:12-21. He also appeals to the created order in 1st Corinthians 11:2-16 when addressing the issue of head coverings. I will treat this passage more in depth in the next section, but for now, it is significant that Paul grounds his instructions for the way men and women are to interact and behave in the order of creation. Paul also appeals to Genesis 2:24 when teaching on marriage in Ephesians 5:22:33. Again, this teaches the reader that God’s intention in creation is what should be taken as normative and the idea for men and women in marriage forever. For Paul, God’s created design and order is normative.

With this trend in the biblical data, and in particular the trend in Paul’s writing, it becomes clear that *Paul’s appeal to the created order in 1st Timothy 2:13-14*

should mean that Paul's instructions to women in 1st Timothy 2:11-12 should be taken as normative for the church in every generation. Exclusively male leadership and teaching in the church is a reflection of God's good design in creation. This principle is reflected throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament, no woman served as a king or priest in Israel.⁸ There are isolated incidents of women prophesying or even being referred to as a "prophetess,"⁹ but the overwhelming majority of prophets were male, and there is no evidence that a woman ever had an ongoing, normative prophetic ministry like Isaiah or Jeremiah. This is carried over into the New Testament as well. There are no female Apostles in the New Testament. There are no female pastors or elders in the New Testament. No book of Scripture in either Testament was written by a female author. This does not mean that the role of women is unimportant. Women play a pivotal role in Scripture and are essential to God's redemptive plan. However, the trend in Scripture is unmistakably clear. God designed men for leadership roles in the home and within His covenant people, and this is a reflection of His good design.

THE ARTEMIS CULT ARGUMENT

Many egalitarian interpreters reconstruct a historical scenario in which the situation in Ephesus necessitated this response from Paul, but this was not the normative practice of the church and was not intended to apply to any other church. According to this view, the worship of the church was being disrupted by certain women in the church (influenced by false teachers) who taught in an aggressive and domineering way to try to be superior to the men, and this caused an angry response by the men. They did so because they were influenced by the cult of the Greek god Artemis, in which the female was exalted over the male. Proponents of this view hold that the Greek word *authentein* (translated as "exercise authority" in verse 12) refers to this harsh and domineering authority of these women and not authority more generally. Therefore, the application of this text from those who hold this view is that as long as women are not harsh in their authority and are not submitted to false teachers, they are free to teach and exercise authority in the church. There are many problems with such an approach to this text, but the most obvious issue is that there is not an ounce of historical or contextual evidence to support it. It is an argument from silence and entirely speculative. There was indeed an Artemis cult in Ephesus, but there is no mention of it in any of the pastoral epistles, and to read it into this text is pure eisegesis. To rest theological conclusions and ministry philosophy on speculation and arguments from silence is a perilous foundation. Finally, this view virtually ignores Paul's given reason for his prohibitions in verses 13-14 and supplies their own reasons that are never mentioned in the text.

⁸Deborah did serve as a judge (Judges 4:4-5:31), but this was a unique circumstance brought about by unusual circumstances. This could have been intended by the author of Judges to highlight the spiritual and moral decline in Israel because of the fact that there were no men that were capable and willing to judge the nation.

⁹These would include Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2nd Kings 22:14), and Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3). God spoke through these women on various occasions, but none of them had an ongoing ministry of prophesying, preaching, and teaching.

THE EDUCATION ARGUMENT

Some egalitarians also argue that the lack of education of women in the 1st century rendered them disqualified to teach, and therefore Paul prohibited them from teaching. Since women typically receive the same level of education as men in our society, the conditions that caused this prohibition are no longer relevant today. Craig Keener is an advocate of this position. He argues that the lack of education for the Ephesian women paralleled Eve's supposed ignorance of God's command. According to Keener, Eve was deceived because "she was not present when God gave the commandment, and thus was dependent on Adam for the teaching. In other words, she was inadequately educated-like the women in the Ephesian church."¹⁰ However, this view is inadequate for a few reasons. First of all, the Genesis narrative never says that the reason Eve was deceived was that she wasn't present when the command was given. In fact, Eve seems to be very aware of the command (Genesis 3:5-6). Second, education is never listed as a requirement for elders. To the contrary, Peter was known as an uneducated man (Acts 4:13). This doesn't mean that education is inconsequential for pastoral ministry, but that it cannot be considered a requirement in the sense that women were only barred from it because of their educational status. Finally, this view virtually ignores Paul's appeal to the created order in verse 13. The education argument should not be seen as a legitimate reason to see this prohibition as restricted.

"ONE IN CHRIST" FROM GALATIANS 3:28

Another argument is the "one in Christ" argument from Galatians 3:28. This verse says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The argument is that since Paul says that men and women are one in Christ, any permanent distinction in role compromises the equality mentioned in this text. Men and women are equally made in the image of God and equally redeemed in Christ; therefore, they should be permitted to have the same roles in the church. Essentially, it boils down to this: if women are not allowed to be in positions of leadership, they cannot truly be considered equal to men, and that contradicts this passage. Therefore, according to proponents of this interpretation of Galatians 3:28, Paul's prohibition against women teaching and exercising authority over men in 1st Timothy 2:12 must be limited in its application to either Timothy's original audience in Ephesus for some cultural reason (such as education or the Artemis cult) or limited to the early church for a redemptive-historical reason.

However, I believe that this is a deficient way to understand Galatians 3:28. This verse comes in the context of a discussion of justification by faith alone. Indeed, this is the main theme of Galatians: The Apostle Paul defending the doctrine of justification by faith alone and not works of the law against the Judaizers. Therefore, the main point of Galatians 3:28 is that there is nothing about a person that can change their standing before God other than faith in Jesus. Gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status do not put a person in a privileged position before God. The Jews had a tendency to be prideful about their standing before God, and they tended to think that their ethnicity put them in a privileged position

¹⁰Craig S Keener. *Paul, Women, & Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul*. Baker Academic, 2013. 116.

in God's economy of salvation. The main point of Galatians 3:28 is to humble the Jews and destroy this attitude. This text has nothing to do with roles or functions. It has to do with *salvation*.

However, that is not the only problem with this interpretation of Galatians 3:28. This interpretation fails to properly distinguish between *ontological* equality and *functional* equality. This interpretation of Galatians 3:28 presupposes that unless men and women are functionally equal, they cannot be ontologically equal. This is a false dichotomy, and a dangerous one at that. This view makes a person's function or role the basis for their value as a human being. Therefore, a person is only as valuable as the role they perform. If this view was carried through to its logical conclusion, we would be forced to conclude that a doctor is a much more valuable human being than a janitor because he has a superior role. This type of thinking is radically secular, and a Christian worldview is diametrically opposed to it. Every human being is intrinsically valuable because they are made in the image of God, regardless of what role they play. The church must be able to distinguish between ontological and functional equality. Men and women are completely equal in value but have different roles in the church and in the family by God's good design.

“WHAT ABOUT HEAD COVERINGS?” FROM 1ST CORINTHIANS 11:3-16

Another passage that is often pointed to as problematic for a complementarian view is 1st Corinthians 11:3-16. In this passage, the Apostle Paul appeals to the created order in distinguishing between men and women, which I believe further supports my position. However, this passage teaches that women are to wear head coverings to church, and the majority of contemporary believers teach that this is not applicable to believers today. The problem for 1st Timothy 2:11-15 is this: if Paul appealed to the created order in 1st Corinthians 11:3-16, and the command to wear head coverings is not applicable today, is the hermeneutical methodology employed to arrive at my exegetical conclusion compromised? I don't believe so. In fact, I believe that this passage *reinforces* it.

Paul begins a new section in 1st Corinthians 11:2. This section goes all the way through the end of chapter 14, and in it, Paul is addressing issues that the Corinthians had with regard to corporate worship. He begins with this discussion in the following way:

“But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven” (1 Cor. 11:3-5).

Paul appeals to the headship of a husband over his wife, and then says that men should not have their head covered and a woman should have hers covered. The Greek word literally means “having down from the head,” so it might be referring to hair length rather than head covering. It is clear from a study of the history and culture of the time that what Paul is mentioning here are different ways that sinful lifestyles were expressed in dress in that culture. According to commentator Craig Blomberg,

“Long hair on Greek men might well have led to suspicions of homosexual behavior. . . Wives, however, should keep their heads covered. Again, the covering could refer to long hair. It could be that Paul wants them to keep it “done up,” as was the custom among married women, rather than loose and flowing—a sign in some circles of being unmarried or, worse still, of suspected adultery (among Jews) or pagan, prophetic frenzy (among Greeks). Or it could be that they are simply wearing their hair too short, perilously close to the shaven heads of a convicted adulteress in Jewish circles or of the more “masculine” partner in a lesbian relationship in the Greek world.”¹¹

Paul was essentially telling the Corinthians that the way that they dressed for corporate worship mattered. This was the same point he made to Timothy in 1st Timothy 2:9-10. Women are not to dress for corporate worship in such a way that draws attention to themselves, is a distraction to others, or communicates that they may be sexually promiscuous or rebellious against their husbands. Therein is the timeless theological principle of 1st Corinthians 11:3-16: *Men and women are not to dress in such a way that blurs the distinction between the genders or communicates that they are sexually promiscuous.*

Paul goes on in this passage to ground his instruction in the order of creation: “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head” (1st Corinthians 11:8-10a). However, if Paul grounds his argument in creation, and creation should be taken as normative, why should we not require women to wear head coverings (or have long hair) today? Because, as Thomas Schreiner points out, “We must distinguish between the fundamental principle that underlies a text and the *application* of that principle in a specific culture.”¹² Head coverings are not the principle in this text, but the application of the principle in this particular culture. It would be incorrect to say that 1st Corinthians 11:3-16 does not apply to the church today. The specific application of the text is different today, but the principle remains the same and is totally applicable today, namely, that men and women are not to dress in such a way that blurs the distinction between the genders or communicates that they are sexually promiscuous. A way to apply this text today would be to say that men should not wear dresses to corporate worship because this blurs the distinction between the genders, or that women should not wear revealing clothing to corporate worship because it could communicate that she is sexually promiscuous.

APPLICATION FOR TODAY

The application of this text to the modern church is a direct parallel of the application of this text to the original audience. The modern church is to apply this text by restricting the office of elder/pastor and the act of teaching/preaching during corporate worship to godly men that meet the requirements of 1st Timothy 3:1-7. God has uniquely called men to be the spiritual leaders in the church and in the home, and godly men need to fulfill these roles with humility and love. God has uniquely called women to respectfully and joyfully submit to the spiritual authority of their husbands in the home and their elders in the church, and to be their source of support, help, and love. God has designed men and women for roles that complement one another. One gender is not inherently superior to the other, and the roles of one gender are not superior to the other. The roles

of men and women in the home and in the church were designed by God, and therefore are for the good of all mankind. Outside of joyful submission to these roles, there can be no human flourishing. This principle is not restricted by culture, age, ethnicity, or anything else. It is in effect until Jesus returns and the church is finally glorified with her Savior.

In light of this principle, it is imperative that men who are called to be elders do not lord their spiritual authority over women in an arrogant, abusive, harsh, or domineering way. Rather, these men are to use their authority to serve. Jesus told his disciples, “you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great one’s exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be a slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45). This is the true character of biblical leadership. Jesus Himself modeled this form of servant leadership by giving His life on the cross as a ransom. The men that God has called to lead His church must model this by self-sacrificially loving and serving those under their care.

Likewise, it is imperative that women joyfully submit to the spiritual headship of the elders in the church. Women are not to seek to usurp the authority that God has given to the elders. Rather, women should make it a joy for the elders to lead them (Hebrews 13:17). Just as Jesus is the supreme model of servant leadership for men, Jesus is also the supreme model of loving submission to authority for women. In His incarnation, Jesus “emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). Even though Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, is of the same essence as the Father (John 10:30), Jesus can say that “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). This doesn’t mean that the Father is ontologically superior to Jesus, but rather that in His incarnation, Jesus submitted to the authority of the Father. This teaches us that submission is not inherently demeaning or dehumanizing. Rather, loving submission is a reflection of the work of Christ on our behalf. Therefore, when women lovingly and joyfully submit to the authority of the elders in the church and use the gifts that God has given them in appropriate ways, they are imitating their Savior.

A question of application for today naturally arises out of all of this, however. What about women that are particularly gifted with leadership and teaching? Are they to let those gifts go to waste because they are not permitted to be pastors? Of course not. These gifts are not to be wasted, but rather, these gifts are to be used in *appropriate contexts* that edify the church and bring glory to God. God has called women to teach other women (Titus 2:3-4). It is likely that Timothy was trained in the Christian faith by his mother and grandmother. The church needs godly women to disciple the next generation of believers through children’s and youth ministry. The church needs godly women to disciple other women through women’s ministry, small group bible studies, Sunday school classes, and more. All of these things are vital to the edification of the church and the spread of the gospel, and they require women that God has gifted with these abilities. These things are not in any way inferior to the role of elder. There is one body and many members (1st Corinthians 12:12).

1st Timothy 2:11-15 is a controversial passage. It is counter-cultural for the 21st century American to say the least. However, the truth that this passage teaches is timeless. *Exclusively male leadership and teaching in the church is a reflection of God's good design in creation.* God has designed the church to function in this way, and it is a good thing. God is the Creator of all things, and He knows what is best for His creation. There can be no human flourishing outside of joyful obedience to God's will. May God give His church faithful men and women that will live this truth out day by day.

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