

# Gospel-shaped Women

## Part 2

### 1 Timothy 2:11-15

B.I: Women in God's household proclaim the excellencies of Christ by embracing their unique role in the church and home.

LTS: Psa. 113

From the beginning of our study of First Timothy we understood that one of the major themes of this little letter points to us what we have called a Gospel-shaped Life. The idea is that the gospel of Jesus Christ doesn't merely save us it continues to transform us as we cooperate with the Spirit in obedience to God's word. Paul is teaching us what it means to live in God's household – His church. And as he does so he reveals to us what it means to have a life that is shaped by the gospel. So we have been asking the Lord to teach us what it means to have a gospel-shaped church full of gospel-shaped men, women, elders, deacons, widows, employers and employees and Christians people in general

Now for the last couple weeks we have been learning about some specific problems that were occurring when the church met for worship. First, Paul was concerned about divisive men who tended to fall into anger and quarrelling. Paul exhorts them rather to pray with holy hands in a unified spirit. On the other hand Paul was concerned about distractive women. They were distracting the church by what they wore to worship. Some were dressing and styling their hair in such a way that flaunted their wealth. Others were distracting the church through their immodest dress. Paul exhorts them to dress in respectable apparel with modesty and self-control as is proper for women who profess godliness with good works. In other words, gospel-shaped men in the church are men of prayer and unity and gospel-shaped women in the church are women who dress modestly as evidence that their profession of godliness is true.

Today we move into the next few verses where Paul, still speaking to the women, addresses the issue of submission in the church. Gospel-shaped women not only are careful about what they wear to church but they are submissive to the leadership of the church.

Read 1 Tim. 2:11-15

Now as I study this text I see three key elements to Paul's teaching:

- I. An authoritative Exhortation (11-12)
- II. An Argument from Creation (13-14)
- III. An Appeal to Gospel Reflection (15)

Now I realize that what Paul is teaching here could not be MORE contrary to the values of our culture. The world hates any talk about women submitting to anything for any reason. But I would suggest to you that one of the things that make Christian relationships in the church and in the home so beautiful and attractive in the eyes of a watching world is the joy and unity that families and churches experience as each person fulfills their God-ordained roles.

This week Paul will teach us the woman's place in the church, and next week we will take a little excursion into 1 Peter and other passages to consider what the Scriptures teach about a woman's place in the home.

## **I. An Authoritative Exhortation: (11-12)**

Read 11-12

1. Notice that before Paul gets to the exhortation for women NOT to teach, he first says (11) "let a woman learn." Women are NOT to be the teachers of the church when it gathers for worship but they (like everyone else in the church) are to be learners. The word for "learn" has the force of a command and comes from the same word that is translated "disciple." Christian women are to be disciples (students or followers) of Jesus Christ and His word.

2. Now, that may seem obvious to our modern ears, but to the early church this was refreshingly new. And frankly, it began with the ministry of Jesus Himself who along with his band of male disciples had a number of women who also traveled with him and were present for much of his teaching. Mary, brother of Lazarus, comes to mind, who sat at Jesus' feet listening to his teaching while her sister busied herself in the kitchen. "*Only one thing is necessary,*" Jesus said to Martha. "*Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.*"

3. O.T. Judaism did not have such high esteem for women. While they were not necessarily barred from attending synagogue, neither were they encouraged to learn. Many ancient religions (and some modern) perceive women to be unworthy of participation in this part of religious life. But that is not true in God's household. Even the O.T. makes it clear that women are spiritual equals with men in God's sight. For example,<sup>1</sup> -

A. God has the same expectations for women as men.

Both were to *obey God's Law* (in Ex. 20 the Ten Commandments are given to both men and women), *to teach God's Law* (Deut. 6:6-7 and Prov. 6:20 indicates both are responsible to teach the Law to their children, which means both must first know it), and [both were] to participate in religious festivals (e.g., Ex. 12 and the Passover). Men and women were viewed as Spiritual Equals.

B. They Had the Same Protection as Men: Penalties given for crimes against

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, J., *Different by design*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 135.

women are the same as those for crimes against men (e.g., Ex. 21:28-32). God equally values the life of a man and the life of a woman.

- C. They Took the Same Vows as Men: The highest level of spiritual commitment available to an Old Testament believer was the Nazirite vow, which was an act of separation from the world and devotion to God. *Women as well as men could take that vow* (Num. 6:2).
- D. They had the Same Access to God as Men: God dealt directly with women in the Old Testament; He didn't go through a man when He wanted to communicate with a woman. For example, the Angel of the Lord... appeared to Hagar (Gen. 16:8-13) and Samson's mother (Jud. 13:2-5).<sup>2</sup>

4. Nevertheless, women in the OT often did NOT have the same roles as men. For example, there were NO queens either in Israel or Judah. Nor were their female priests. Also, women had NO ongoing prophetic ministry as did the O.T. prophets.

5. IAnd then, when we come to the NT, the same distinction is made. On the one hand men and women are spiritual equals in God's sight. Hence Paul writes in Gal. 3:28 "*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.*" This is true spiritual equality. *Women get to relate to God on the same level as men and many of them do it better than men.*

6. On the other hand, God has designed for them to have different roles in the church and home. Hence, passages like the one before us this morning where it is God's will for men to teach and exercise authority over the church and for women to NOT teach and exercise authority over the church body.

7. As spiritual equals with men, women must be diligent to learn. They can and should learn everything the men have to opportunity to learn. And yet, Paul's teaching here is not really focused on the FACT that they should learn, but on the MANNER in which they should learn; that is (11); "quietly"

8. There are some who are of the opinion that what Paul means is that from the time a woman enters the church building till the time she leaves she must remain silent. But the apostle simply means that she should have a quite demeanor, a spirit that is peaceable instead of being argumentative. We see this idea back in verse 2 of this same chapter where Paul exhorts the men to pray "*for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*"

9. And Peter teaches women along these same lines when he exhorts them (1 Pet. 3:4) to have a "gentle and quiet spirit" *in the home* rather than arguing and nagging their husbands. *But we will talk about women in the home next week.* Right now Paul is talking about women in church, and he's saying that when women come to worship with the gathered church they should come with the proper attitude; namely, with a quiet and peaceful demeanor. Rather than coming into the fellowship with distractive clothing that flaunts their wealth or form; rather than coming with

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

demands to be allowed equal time in the pulpit, they should come with a peaceful and quiet demeanor. And then he mentions another attitude that corresponds to the first.

10. Paul says (11), “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.” The word for “submissiveness” means, “to line up under.” It is a call to appropriate subordination under established leadership. We know that Paul means that women should be submissive to men because verse 12 says that they are NOT to exercise authority over men. But we need to establish an important caveat here. Paul is not commanding that all women in the church should submit to all the men in the church, because not all men taught and had authority. “We should not separate submission to what is taught from submission to those who taught it” when the church gathers.<sup>3</sup>

11. In other words, when Christian women join the gathered church for worship they should come NOT to promote themselves or press for opportunity to preach and teach. Rather, they should come with a “quiet” and peaceful spirit eager to learn from the Scriptures as they are taught by the men who have been appointed to the offices of pastors and elders. These men are the ones who have authority in the church as it is exercised by preaching the Scriptures, teaching the Scriptures, and leading according to the Scriptures. But when the church gathers for corporate worship women are NOT to teach. And since that is the role of the pastors and elders, this means that they should NOT be placed in that office.

12. Paul makes that explicit in verse 12 (read v. 12)

13. It seems clear that in the church of Ephesus where Timothy was serving there were women who, under the influence of the false teaching, were pressing for the right to preach and teach when the church gathered. Some of the women were trying to assert themselves as public teachers in the services of worship and perhaps viewed themselves as candidates for pastor or elder.

A. We know this not merely a hypothetical situation because Paul says “*I do not permit.*” As MacArthur explains,

The Greek word translated “permit” (or “allow” *epitrepō*) is always used in the New Testament to speak of permitting someone to do what they want. Paul’s choice of words implies that some women in Ephesus desired to teach and have authority.<sup>4</sup>

B. According to Paul, however, the responsibility to teach the church when it meets for worship is laid upon men. Not all the men, but certain men whom the HS places in those positions authority. The women, on the other hand, were to remain “quiet” which in this verse means they are not to teach.

14. Now, is it ever appropriate for women teach in other contexts among the body of Christ? Yes!

- Titus 2:3 (Turn there with me) Paul writes (read v. 3-4).
- Act. 18:26 Priscilla along with her husband brought gentle and persuasive correction to Apollos who was a celebrity teacher in

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Schreiner, 187

<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, J., *Different by design*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 138.

their time.

- 2 Tim. 3:15 Lois and Eunice, Timothy's grandmother and mother, taught the Scriptures to their son/grandson and were instrumental in making him into the kind of godly young man that Paul would want to have on his ministry team.
- In Proverbs children are instructed to listen to the teaching of their father and mother.
- Deut. 6, both mothers and fathers are to teach the children.
- Additionally, Paul makes it clear in 1 Cor. 7 that women are permitted to speak out loud when the church meets.
- Also (Acts. 17:1-4) as Paul traveled teaching the Scriptures he reasoned with people and answered the questions not only of men of leading women. I see no reason why women cannot participate fully in mixed Bible studies under qualified male leadership.
- We also know that throughout church history God has used faithful women on the mission field to accomplish much good through evangelism, service, administration, and teaching.

15. It seems to me that the prohibition against women teaching in this passage is exclusive to those occasions when the church gathers as a mixed group of men and women to worship and hear the authoritative teaching of Scripture. Again, MacArthur writes,

Women can proclaim the word of God EXCEPT when the church meets for corporate worship. The O.T. says, "The women who proclaim the good tidings are a great host" (Psa. 68:11). The NT gives examples of Mary, Anna, and Priscilla declaring God's truth to men and women.<sup>5</sup>

13. Now, what does this mean for you ladies of Calvary Bible Church? Let me be very practical and direct. Are you ready? Here it is - keep on doing what you have always done. Listen, it is difficult for me to imagine a group of women who are more godly, competent, and supportive than the joyful women of Calvary Bible Church. Now I realize that for some of you younger ladies this teaching may be new, and perhaps that's why God brought you here. Let me encourage you to seek out an older woman in the church who might disciple you and teach you how to be the kind of young woman that God wants you to be. I guarantee, you will not regret it.

14. So this is An Authoritative Exhortation. And that brings us to the second point.

## **II. An Argument from Creation: (13-14)**

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<sup>5</sup> John MacArthur, J., *Different by design*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 141

1. At this point Paul knows that people in the church are going to want him to demonstrate that all of this is really in keeping with the word of God, so Paul offers two arguments from the creation account – the first three chapters of Genesis.
2. Why should women take the submissive role under their church leaders and their husbands? First (13), “*For Adam was formed first, then Eve.*”
3. The second creation account is clearly what Paul has in mind here. Genesis 2:4-25 is the narrative of Adam being created before Eve. Now, one thing to note here is that this narrative takes place before the fall so it cannot be a reference to the curse of God on humans because of Sin. In other words, the submission of the woman is NOT a result of sin. Rather Paul is appealing to his early reader’s common understanding of primogeniture. That is, the right of the firstborn. “Paul’s readers would have easily understood the notion of the firstborn having authority.
3. In a Jewish home the firstborn was always considered the highest in rank. In fact, this is why Jesus is called the “*Firstborn of all creation*” (Col. 1). It simply means Jesus outranks everything that God created. He is God’s firstborn, therefore all of the Father’s inheritance belongs to Him. The priority of Adam in creation would naturally have suggested his authority over Eve.”<sup>6</sup> He was, as it were, the “first born” (or first created) of men and as such would naturally be thought of as the one who is highest in rank. This would have been intuitive to Paul’s original readers.
4. In some contexts this is even intuitive for us today. For example, when my kids get in the car I have noticed that there is a kind of intuitive ranking that determines who gets to sit up front. If my son Wes is in the mix the twins tend to let him sit in front. Why, because there is an unspoken elevation of rank that is granted to the older brother. I have even observed this among my twins. On occasion I have seen Maddy get in the front seat as Mike approaches and says, Why do you get to sit up front? To which Maddy responds, “Born first!” Sorry. If you wanted this seat so bad you should have been born first!
5. Paul is saying, women should submit to the appropriate men because Adam was created first and that means he has a higher rank. This does NOT suggest that Eve was in any way inferior to Adam but rather that it was ordained by God for her to embrace a different role or function than Adam
6. Authority and submission are beautiful things when they are lived out biblically. Witness the fact that even the God the Son in the Gospel record is revealed to be One who willingly and joyfully submitted to the Father. Certainly, we can all agree that the Son was NOT inferior to the Father. That’s a heretical teaching. Rather, the Son is eternally equal with the Father, and yet He

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<sup>6</sup> Andreas Kostenberger and Thomas Schriener, *Women In The Church*, (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2016), 203

came to earth to die for sinners in functional obedience to the Father. When we submit to established authority we reflect the beauty of the glory of Jesus who willingly submitted to the Father.

7. So women are to embrace the role of functional submission because this is how God designed the first couple to function in relation to one another.

8. Second, Paul also points to the original sin, but not in a way that seems particularly intuitive for us. Paul says (14), “*And Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.*”

9. Now some will say that Paul is teaching us that women are more susceptible to deception than men are and that’s why they should submit. I don’t think that can be demonstrated to be true. There are plenty of men who lack discernment and plenty of women who have demonstrated enormous wisdom and discernment in the face of unparalleled confusion. I don’t think that is the right interpretation of this text.

10. One observation that bears mentioning in the Genesis record is that even though Eve was deceived first Adam was held accountable. When God comes to them after the sin He specifically confronts Adam first. Furthermore, it was through Adam NOT EVE that sin was passed down to all of their offspring. People are born sinners through Adam. What does this tell us? It tells us that God viewed Adam as the leader before Eve was deceived.

11. More importantly, however, Paul may have had something else immediately in mind. Paul focuses on the fact that Satan approached Eve rather than Adam. In that scene in the garden, Satan had abandoned his established role in the world. His approaching Eve rather than Adam was an intentional circumvention of Adam’s role as leader. And the fact that Adam let his wife be deceived right in front of him (the text says Adam was with her) indicates that Adam himself failed to fulfill his established role. All of this (Schreiner suggests) reminds the read of what happens when humans undermine God’s established roles.<sup>7</sup>

12. So Paul has given us an Authoritative Exhortation, An Argument from Creation, and finally...

### **III. An Appeal to Gospel Reflection:**

1. Now, I’m sure some of you have been eager for me to tackle this verse, and it is finally here. What does he mean when Paul says “Yet she shall be saved through childbearing? That’s good question, and many have attempted to offer a plausible answer.

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Schreiner, 216

- A. John R.W. Stott links this statement to Mary giving birth to the Savior, hence we are all saved through childbirth.
- B. MacArthur suggests that through childbirth the stigma of being the one who sinned first and brought sin into the world is relieved. The idea is that while it was through a woman that mankind experienced death, it is also through a woman that every human being comes to life. That's a plausible interpretation, but not one that settles well in my mind.
- C. David Platt says he can explain it in three words, "Only God Knows!" That certainly expresses the frustration commentators and interpreters of this text all mutually experience. But there is one more that bears our consideration.

2. Thomas Schreiner, the Southern Seminary theologian who has been most helpful to me in this study offers what I think is the best way to view this verse. He writes,

Understanding the historical situation will aid us in answering this question. The false teachers... prohibited marriage and certain foods (1 Tim. 4:1-5). If they banned marriage, then they probably also criticized bearing children. Paul selected childbearing, then, as a specific response to the shafts from the false teachers. Referring to childbearing is also appropriate because it represents the fulfillment of the woman's domestic role as mother in distinction from the man. Paul probably highlighted childbearing... as representative of the appropriate role of women... It is the most notable example of the divinely intended difference in roles between men and women.

3. How is this an appeal for gospel reflection? It is an appeal to gospel reflection in the same way all obedience to God is a reflection of gospel-transformation in one's heart. In our culture to speak of women submitting to authority and bearing children is taken as a throwback to the dark ages! In the world's eyes suggesting that women should focus on cultivating and gentle and quiet spirit with modesty and submission and to have babies and raise children is nothing more than male-chauvinism and bigotry. In God's eyes, however, it shows the character of a woman who truly loves God and finds her greatest joy in pleasing Him. It is evidence (as Paul says at the end of v. 15) that they are continuing in the faith, love, and holiness which are characteristics that only the H.S. can create in a woman's heart.

4. A gospel-shaped woman doesn't take her cues from the world but rather from the life-giving word of God. Elizabeth Elliot once said, "*The fact that I am a woman does not make me a*



*different kind of Christian, but the fact that I am a Christian does make me a different kind of woman.”<sup>8</sup>*

5. And that’s what Christian women are called to be – different from the world in all the wonderful ways God has called you to be different. As Peter says, “This is precious in the eyes of God” (1 Pet. 3:4).

**Women in God’s household proclaim the excellencies of Christ by embracing their unique role in the church and home.**

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<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Elliot Quotes, <http://womenofchristianity.com/quotes/elisabeth-elliott-quotes/>