**Class 9: Biblical Manhood and Womanhood – Roles of Men and Women in the Church (Pt. 2)[[1]](#footnote-1)**

1. **Introduction**

How should men and women serve the local church? Last week we saw this basic principle: *Scripture not just allows, but expects men and women to participate in the majority of the church’s ministry.* We looked at **1 Cor. 12** where God gives gifts to both men and women for the edification of the body, and talked about how women and men serve the church through all sorts of ministries: through reading scripture and praying at services, through speaking words of prophecy or Biblical encouragement, through being deacons and deaconesses, through congregational governance, evangelism, caring for the needy, discipling one another, etc. Of course, whenever you serve in any of these ways, you’ll do so *as* a man or woman. There is balance and health that comes when *both* men and women edify the body, through these various forms.

But we also looked at the job description that God gives elders throughout the New Testament and saw that it’s no surprise that God reserves the office of elder to men. The things elders are called to do have a masculine bent: elders provide for the church by teaching, protect the church from false doctrine, lead by example, and bear responsibility before God for how they shepherd the flock.

You see the summary statement there in your handout: *Men and women are called to serve the body in all capacities, except for leading and teaching the church, which God’s Word assigns to men.* So let’s go right ahead to the two key passages that spell out how men’s and women’s roles *differ* when it comes to the local church context.

1. **1 Timothy 2:8-15**

Please open your Bibles to **1 Timothy 2:8-15:** (pew bibles on pg. 991)

*8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 9 likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. 11 Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.*

**A. The Context: False Teaching in Ephesus**

The church at Ephesus, which Timothy was pastoring, had been under attack by false teachers (see 1 Tim. 1:3-7, 1:18-20; 4:1-3; 6:3-5, 20-21). These false teachers seemed especially to target vulnerable women, such as young widows (1 Tim. 5:14-15; 2 Tim. 3:6).[[2]](#footnote-2) And from the verses we just read in 1 Tim. 2, it appears these teachers may have been influencing women in the church to live ungodly lives that affected the way they dressed as well as their understanding of their God-given roles in the church.

So to help Timothy set things right, in verse 7 Paul says that he has been appointed as an apostle of the one true gospel, the message that there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Christ died and rose again to save all who repent and trust in him. As the one who has brought this message, Paul now instructs the church on how to live in light of this good news. In verse 9 he encourages women to dress modestly. Immodest dress in church risks drawing the hearts and minds of others away from the glorious gospel Paul summarized in verses 3-6. Rather, in verse 10 he says that women have a wonderful opportunity to commend the gospel not through their dress but their deeds. Notice here that Paul assumes *women* can and should build up the church and display godliness through their good works!

**B. A Call to Learn Quietly with Submissiveness**

Then in **verse 11** he exhorts women to “learn quietly with all submissiveness.” This means that he’s telling them to demonstrate a *trustful posture to Biblical teaching.*[[3]](#footnote-3) Were some women disrupting the teaching in Ephesus? We don’t know for sure. But Paul here positively commends a posture like that of Mary, who sat at Jesus’ feet, humble, peaceable, and eager to obey. By submitting to the Word, as it is taught correctly, women submit to God.

But we shouldn’t focus only on the words “quietly” and “submissiveness.” We should also note what Paul says about women learning. The ancient world didn’t always treat women as worthy of religious instruction. But here Paul insists that women can and should *learn* the faith. A disciple is, fundamentally, a learner. From its inception, Christianity was counter-cultural in insisting that women are not second-class disciples.

**C. Two Restrictions**

Then [next page inhandout] in **verse 12** Paul restates **verse 11** in the negative. He says women are not permitted “to teach or to exercise authority over a man.” ***So from this verse, we see 2 basic restrictions.* The firstrestriction** is that *women are not permitted to* ***teach*** *men*. Verse 8 suggests that Paul primarily has in mind what happens when the church gathers – he’s talking about the various churches “in every place” meeting for prayer. So, consistent with how the word “teach” is often used in the New Testament, Paul here is most likely referring to the kind of teaching that someone gifted by the Spirit would do to bring *authoritative instruction in doctrine* to an assembled congregation.

Some may ask:***Does this mean then that the Bible prohibits women from teaching at all?*** Of course this doesn’t mean that a woman should never teach. Paul encourages women to teach other women in **Titus 2**. He commends the instruction Timothy received from the care of his mother and grandmother in **2 Tim 1**. Paul encourages all believers to instruct one another, in a certain sense, as they sing the word together, in **Col 3.16**. I learn things about the Lord all the time from women *informally* as they encourage me with what they’re studying in scripture, challenge and lovingly rebuke me about my sin and pride, or testify to God’s goodness in their lives. And I could keep going. But Paul’s concern here is with that formal kind of teaching and authority exercised in the regular weekly gathering of the saints. To make it more specific for us, in our context this would be the preaching and teaching from the pulpit we receive on Sunday mornings and evenings, as well as Wednesday night Bible study and the Core Seminar Hour.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**The second restriction** is that *a woman is not permitted to have authority over a man*. The word translated “have authority over” means “to govern or rule over” them. In the New Testament, and especially the letters to Timothy and Titus, this ruling or governing function is ascribed to the office of elders, also called pastors and overseers.[[5]](#footnote-5) For example, in 1 Tim 3:4-5 the elders’ care for the church is likened to “managing” or “ruling” a household. 1 Tim 5:17 likewise says the elders “rule” – same word – the church. Of course, the primary way the elders rule is through the teaching of the Word, so these two functions go hand in hand.

Some Christians have interpreted this verse to mean that Paul’s only prohibiting *authoritative* teaching, as in the teaching that male elders do. So long as a woman is under the auspices of her elders’ authority, some say, then she’s free to preach to the whole church because then her teaching falls under their oversight. But that’s not what Paul says. This verse prohibits both teaching and exercising rule. Others have argued that this verse merely means that women are not to *usurp* the position of teacher; but as long as the elders ask them to preach, it’s OK. But neither the grammar nor the vocabulary can support that notion.[[6]](#footnote-6) Notice how Paul again repeats his earlier point at the end of verse 12: “rather, she is to remain quiet.” In other words, women are to *listen* to the authoritative teaching – they’re to benefit from it, disciple one another in it, encourage their brothers in Christ to believe and obey it, but God hasn’t called them to *deliver* that teaching to the church.

What about Priscilla in Acts 18, who along with her husband Aquila corrects Apollos in his falsehood and helps lead him to the truth? The word “teach” isn’t used in that text, but rather the verse says, “they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26). And that took place not in the formal church gathering, but privately. It seems to be a one-time, unique crisis-type situation. Priscilla and Aquila were used mightily by God to help an erring teacher more sound, but such an example isn’t what Paul’s talking about here in 1 Tim 2.

What is the basis for the instruction we’ve seen in verses 11-12? Let’s look at **verses 13-14** where we find 2 particular reasons.

**D. Two Reasons for These Restrictions**

**Reason 1:** in **verse 13** we read, *“For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”* It’s important to see here that Paul’s argument isn’t one from pragmatics or preference or cultural tradition. His reason is rooted in the creation order in **Genesis 2**. God made man and woman in a certain order to communicate a universal truth that He intended to guide and guard his people. Timothy’s church was at risk of dissension and confusion if they ignored this revealed pattern. Paul is *not* saying that because Adam was formed first he is therefore more important, valuable, or worthy. Genesis 1 reminds us that man and women are equally made in God’s image. Rather, the fact that God created man and woman in a particular sequence highlights the reality that men and women have distinct dispositions and roles, and hints at what those dispositions and roles are. Recall that Adam *exercised authority* over Eve by naming her, echoing how God himself named the various spheres of his creation. And remember that God gave his good law to Adam before Eve was created. The text in Genesis implies that Adam was responsible for conveying this *teaching* to his wife.[[7]](#footnote-7) Even in those early days of creation, God was tutoring the first man and woman in the ways that he had designed them gloriously equal yet significantly distinct. These distinctions previewed the different roles we’re seeing here in the church.

**Reason 2** for these restrictions is **verse 14:** *“Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”* Paul isn’t saying that women are more gullible than men. Both men and women can be deceived (Jer 17:9). But when Paul says “*Adam was not deceived*,” he’s observing that Adam isn’t the one that the serpent targeted first with his temptation. In **Genesis 3**, when Satan went to Eve and lied to her, he subverted God’s created order. Instead of going to Adam, God’s appointed leader in that marriage relationship, he went to Eve, putting her in the position of spokesperson, leader and defender. Remember, Adam and Eve were God’s people under God’s rule, in covenant relationship to one another. In that sense, they were something of a prototype of the church! Paul is helping us see that this episode in Genesis 3 confirms God’s plan for male leadership in the covenant community of God’s people.

Satan wants men in biblical leadership roles to be passive and indifferent toward God’s commands, and he wants women to come out from under the protection of male leaders in the church so that they too can be deceived. Twisting gender roles around has always been part of his strategy!

Friends, we should pause and recognize that these verses sound quite counter-cultural today. Scripture often challenges the prevailing spirit of the age. But let’s remember that God’s Word, which never changes like the shifting shadows of culture, isn’t just true. It’s also good. It gives health and life. It can be tempting to focus on the negative of these verses. Why doesn’t God allow women to teach and exercise authority over the church, we ask? But hopefully, through this core seminar, we’ve come to see that the fundamental equality of men and women in God’s image isn’t threatened by the fact that God has given men and women distinct inclinations and roles. Teaching the gathered congregation and exercising oversight are duties with a distinctively *fatherly* shape to them, so we shouldn’t be surprised that God calls men to these roles. And yet, we should also honor women for how they fulfill God’s calling. Our congregation is *full* of godly, humble, discerning women who faithfully obey the teaching in these verses – praise God! They support the preaching here by listening, learning, praying for the preachers, and obeying. In that, notice that it’s *women* who are called, as a whole group, to give a model of what it means to be disciples who submit to biblical teaching. Yes, all men are disciples and learners too, but these verses should make us grateful especially for the wonderful feminine examples we have here at CHBC of submitting to the preached Word.

Finally, Paul concludes with **a promise** in **verse 15.** It’s a famously difficult verse to interpret. But it’s here to give women hope: “*Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.”* The last phrase is clear. If any women have been guilty of overstepping their Biblical role in this matter, they shouldn’t despair; they should walk in repentance: They should continue in faith, love, holiness, and self-control.

What about the phrase “saved through childbearing?” We know from Paul’s writing elsewhere that you’re only saved by repentance and faith in Christ. Paul’s not teaching here salvation by works. We also know that some women can’t have children because of the fall’s painful and mysterious effects on our bodies. There are plenty of women in the Bible who are fully feminine in spite of their difficulties in bearing children. Paul’s not saying that! There are two possibilities for what he means. One is that since we’re in the context of women’s roles, the verse may convey that women should embrace their uniquely feminine callings. That will be seen *often*, for those who are married, in embracing their role of being a wife and a mother, if God provides the gift of children. So “childbearing” here could be something of shorthand for femininity more generally. After all, only women can bear children, and Eve was called the mother of all the living in Gen 3:20. Kind of like saying a basketball player who’s been neglecting his sport should get back on the court and devote himself to “shooting layups” again, even if he’s the type of player who is called mainly to focus on defense or passing. Shooting layups is shorthand for playing basketball more generally.

Or, another option, possible in accord with the underlying Greek grammar, is that Paul is saying women are saved through “***the*** *childbearing,”* or more literally, the child-birth. The birth of the Messiah. Remember, child-bearing was cursed in Genesis 3. Does that mean women have no hope? Not at all! The promised victorious offspring *was* indeed born of a woman, one of the daughters of Eve. Even if women in Ephesus had been disorderly in the church, they can be saved by trusting in this long-awaited Son of God who came to undo the curse.

**QUESTIONS?**

1. **1 Corinthians 11:3-16**

In the remaining time we have, let’s look next at **1 Cor 11:3-16**. (pew Bibles on pg. 958) As you turn there, here’s some background:

It appears that in Corinth, the culturally acceptable thing for women to do to honor their husbands was to wear some type of head covering or veil in public. Going without a head covering may have signaled a subversive or rebellious posture against a woman’s husband. In this section Paul’s calling the women not to abandon this “symbol of [her husband’s] authority” (v. 10) but to maintain it. He says, starting in verse 3:

*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. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, 5 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. 6 For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. 7 For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; 12 for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. 16 If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.*

We’re not going to deal with every possible question today. Instead, we’re going to focus on 3 major principles from this text:

**A)** **God expects women to serve publicly in the church by praying and prophesying.**

As we see in **verse 5**, Paul assumes that women pray and prophesy during the church’s meeting. When we think of New Testament prophecy in a public church meeting, we shouldn’t see it as the giving of inerrant revelation from God, because later in Ch. 14 he says prophecies must be evaluated. We can define this type of prophecy as *speaking about God’s truth to edify God’s people.* There’s more we could say, but however we understand prophecy, this verse indicates that women prayed and offered prophecy – biblical words of encouragement – in the New Testament church.

Now, what about *1 Corinthians 14:34-35*? Doesn’t that go directly against this idea? Flip over there and follow along…

*1 Corinthians 14:34-35 “As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.*

Is this some kind of contradiction with what we’ve just heard? I don’t think so. In chapter 11 Paul is addressing the hearts of the women in Corinth, calling them to honor their husbands publicly as they participate. In chapter 14, the context from verse 29 is “weighing what has been said.” That verse that says when people in the congregation give prophecies, those prophecies must be weighed and judged as either being from the Lord or not from the Lord. So, the “speaking” he’s talking about here *seems to* refer to the authoritative evaluation of prophesies that have been given.

In other words, Paul affirms that women pray and prophesy, but it’s not appropriate for them to “speak” when it comes to the public evaluation of those prophecies against Scripture, because that would fall into the category of exercising authoritative teaching to the church.

So for us here at CHBC, you’ll frequently hear women and men alike share testimonies of salvation when they get baptized or testimonies of grace on Sunday nights, or when they speak up at Wednesday night Bible study. But when they do, Mark or another pastor is standing there on behalf of the all the elders to “weigh” what has been said.

Back to chapter 11 and principle B:

**B) God calls women to serve in the church in a way that clearly showcases their feminine identity.**

This is the whole point of the head-coverings, and really the whole section of verses 3-16. Paul is calling women to present themselves in a way that makes it clear that they are submitting to God’s design of honoring male leadership in the home and church. When Paul says in verses 14-15 that “nature” teaches the Corinthians that long hair is a disgrace for a man but glory for a woman, he’s *not* claiming that certain hair lengths or styles are essential to being masculine or feminine. He’s saying that nature teaches you that men and women are different. We naturally have a conscience that should direct us to live consistently with our masculinity or femininity, whatever that may look like in a particular culture. Hair lengths and fashions may change over time, but what hasn’t changed, what is “natural,” is the fact that we’re created to express our manhood or womanhood in culturally appropriate ways.

So, should Christian women wear head coverings today? Some people think so. But in our culture, women don’t wear head coverings, so to wear one wouldn’t necessarily communicate submission, which is the point of what Paul’s saying here. The challenge is that in our culture, we don’t have a garment that says, “I’m happy to be a woman who accepts the authority of my husband and of the elders according to God’s design.” For us, a woman might show respect to her husband and to the other men of the church by 1) intentionally building up her husband with her speech if she does testify publicly; 2) if she has concerns about the teaching she’s hearing, bringing those concerns to her husband first if she’s married (1 Cor 14:35), and if she’s single, bringing those privately to an elder.

**C.) Male teaching authority in the church doesn’t invalidate the equality of interdependence.**

This is really our summary point. Like we saw in 1 Tim 2, male teaching authority in the church is an implication of God’s created order. In **verses 8-10**, Paul writes: “*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, because of the angels.”* In other words, the church should be a place where God’s design for marriage is treasured and exemplified. What do the angels have to do with it? Some have suggested that as the heavenly beings look at the church following God’s created order, they’re filled with joy and give praise to God. Others suggest these could be believers from another church checking in on the health of the congregation, because the word angel simply means “messenger.” I’m not sure, but thankfully it doesn’t affect the main point of this text.

But Paul goes on, verses 11-12: *Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.* The point? **We need each other!** We have different roles, but neither sex is superior or inferior. Men and women are interdependent, and both are utterly dependent on God.

**Questions? Comments?**

1. This morning in Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, we’ll be looking at the beauty of God’s plan for gender roles in the local church. We’ll try to tackle some tricky questions: head coverings, that verse in 1 Timothy about women being “saved through childbearing,” and more. Even though men and women don’t do all the same things in the church, we’ll see that God has designed us to need one another. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In 1 Tim 5:15 we see that some young widows “have already strayed after Satan.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The word used for learning “quietly” is used in several places in the NT to describe a crowd that is silenced in preparation for someone’s speech: Acts 11:18 (Judaizers silenced), 21:14 (Epheisans cease arguing); 22:2 (rioters being silenced); 1 Thess 4:11 (mind own business); 2 Thess 3:12 (work in quietness and earn their own living); 1 Peter 3:4 (woman should have a quiet spirit). In particular, Paul is telling the women among them who were characterized by (in the words of 1 Tim 5:13) “going house to house, [being] gossips and busybodies” to be quiet and stop stirring up trouble. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Moved to a footnote to save word count, but an important point to make if you have the time, and a question you’ll likely receive in Q&A:* So it’s natural to ask: Would this verse allow women to teach men in a parachurch setting, like a college ministry? Does it mean that men can learn from theology books published by women?These areas of application are less clear, and Christians may disagree. Clearly the standard Paul is setting is that only men teach the gathered church. In settings that are optional, informal, and outside the local church like a college ministry gathering, it may be permissible for women to teach, but I think the Biblical pattern recommends the wisdom of having such teaching done by men especially when the teaching involves explaining scripture and exhorting men and women to obey it. When it comes to books and articles: since writing is more removed, a form of communication intended for individual believers more broadly, that doesn’t seem to fall under what Paul is addressing here. Paul’s concern is order in the local church. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For instance, 1 Timothy 3:5 speaks of an elder “caring for” the church in the same way that he “manages” his own home. Then in 1 Timothy 5:17 specifically speaks of elders who “rule well.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See the chapters by Wolters, Köstenberger, and Schreiner in *Women in the Church.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Note: this is certainly an inference from the text. It’s possible that God could have given his command to Eve directly in an incident not recorded by the Biblical author. But the fact that God speaks to Adam first about their sin (3:9) is suggestive of the man’s responsibility to lead his wife in obeying God, and implies that Adam would have been the one who mediated God’s law to her. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)