

“Oneness”

Spring Series 1

Lesson 3

“1 Timothy 2:8-15”

Objective: To examine the Scriptures in order to seek understanding and guidance on how we are to work together as the people of God using all the gifts and resources that God has bestowed upon the Church. Through the centuries the relationship of men and women and their service to God has been hotly debated and continually examined. We consider what we are undertaking here to be a continuation of that debate and dialogue as we carefully and prayerfully seek the guidance of God through His Word and His Spirit. We are people of the Book and it is to the book that we look for answers to our questions, not to traditions, to science, or to society.

Materials: The Bible, Ancient translations, Commentaries, both ancient and modern, Books, journal articles, dictionaries, the internet, inscriptions, Ancient letters, Ancient Documents, lectures and other resources as may be appropriate.

Procedures

1. To explore the message of God in the hope of understanding more fully its meaning first as it was understood by the original audiences of Scripture and what they will have understood as God’s will for their lives in community.
2. To understand how Scripture has inspired, challenged, and educated people down through the centuries guiding them not only in their personal lives, but in their vocation as image-bearers of God.
3. We will seek to find out how beliefs have played a role in the history of Christianity and how they continue to impact our existence and service to Jesus Christ in the world today.
4. We will provide a sheet to take home as a reminder of what has been examined and to provide additional opportunities for consideration of these matters and their application in order to live out daily our eternal destiny. This sheet can be used as a discussion guide for small group discussion.

In the first two lessons we saw that the issue of hierarchy between the male and the female was not addressed in Genesis until the man and the woman betrayed God, and each other. It was only after this betrayal of trust that the complementary relationship as image-bearers of God was distorted and we are told regarding the woman that her “husband” would now rule (יִמְשָׁל - *yimshal*) over her. As we come to 1 Timothy 2:8-15 Paul makes a claim that is related to Genesis 1 to 3. One of the questions that needs to be addressed is whether Paul here intends to make a universal claim based upon the intent of God in creation, or whether his intention is to address a unique and special situation at Ephesus using that account as an example. “Many evangelicals view all biblical passages about the role and ministry of women through the lens of 1 Timothy 2:12. It becomes the key verse on women, the one on which all others turn.”¹

The reality is that we must seek to hear the entire canon of Scripture and we should listen to all of Scripture in the context in which it was given. We are all culturally driven in our interpretation of Scripture. Some are driven by their fear; a fear of

¹ Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1992), p. 12.

change and the erosion of their traditions. Many today fear that a change in the role of women in the church is driven by the women's movement and so any change of perspective, or interpretation must therefore be opposed.² I know that it was the same with regard to the issue of slavery. Our goal in this study is not to have our vision clouded by fear, of anyone, or anything, but to do our best to understand the meaning of the words of Paul in their original context and then to ask what those words mean for us today. Our desire is to understand the message that God intends for us over all else: which is message to be found in the text of the Bible and not what are merely our assumptions, or traditions.

In order to help us understand the meaning of what Paul wrote to Timothy it is useful to have some background for the letter. We must point out at the beginning that there is very little in the letter itself to help us understand its destination and circumstances. Trebilco argues that 1 and 2 Timothy were written

² Bobby Valentine, "First Timothy 2.8-15 & the Silencing of Women in Worship," *Stoned-Campbell Disciple* (2013) 20th of February, <http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2013/02/20/first-timothy-2-8-15-the-silencing-of-women-in-worship/>.

to Ephesus³ with some opponents clearly in view in these letters.⁴ When listening to one side of a conversation there is a tremendous potential for misunderstanding. What we have in 1 Timothy is one side of Paul's conversation with Timothy. This is a personal letter that is very different from some of the other letters that Paul wrote to churches (i.e. Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Galatians). The more we can come to understand the circumstances of the letter the more likely we are to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpreting what Paul wrote to Timothy, though in all of this there remains an element of speculation and assumption. Ephesus is a unique locale with a unique set of circumstances, and understanding some of the major influences of this great ancient city will aid us in our understanding.

Ephesus was elevated to the status of being the capital of Asia in place of Pergamum by Augustus Caesar. During the reign of Augustus, Ephesus experienced tremendous growth in prosperity. The population of Ephesus during the Roman period

³ 1 Timothy 1:3 - **I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine,** CEB.

⁴ Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), p. 6.

is generally estimated at between 200,000 and 250,000. If this is correct, it would then make Ephesus the third largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. Ephesus was strategically located as a city of international trade. It was of course the home to many religious cults, but by far the most significant was that of Artemis of Ephesus. Artemis features prominently in the narrative of Acts 19 and the cult of the Ephesian Artemis is what made Ephesus a center of religious life during this period. The influence of the cult of Artemis extended far beyond the religious sphere to the civic, economic, and cultural life of both Ephesus and the empire.⁵

The pinnacle of architecture at ancient Ephesus was the Temple of Artemis, which was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. In its 1200 year history the sanctuary underwent a great deal of evolution and expansion.⁶ The dimensions of the temple (during Paul's day) were 377 feet by 235 feet.⁷ It contained 127 columns, each approximately 2 meters in diameter

⁵ Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, pp. 13-19.

⁶ Richard E. Oster, Jr., "Ephesus," in David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 2 (New York NY: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 542-549.

⁷ John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 1991), p. 256.

and 20 meters high. It dominated the city by its size, grandeur and influence. This facility became the primary banking center for the Roman Empire with vast amounts of money being deposited here for safekeeping. Even when the city fell to another, no one dared to sack the Temple of Artemis, or to take the funds deposited there. It was the most secure place to deposit money in the ancient Roman world.⁸ Ephesus was the site of Paul's longest missionary tenure as presented in Acts, but was also the base of operations for Paul and his associates as they spread the Gospel into the adjacent cities and regions of Asia Minor.⁹ Artemis was probably the most popular of the Hellenic deities and was worshipped wherever the Greeks settled. Known by the Romans as Diana after being identified with the Italian goddess of that name, she was considered to be the goddess-proper of human childbirth. She represented what the Greek male both admired and feared in the female.¹⁰

⁸ Richard Oster, "The Ephesian Artemis as an Opponent of Early Christianity," in Theodor Klauser and Ernst Dassman, eds., *Jahrbuch Für Antike und Christentum* (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1976), pp. 24-44.

⁹ Richard E. Oster, Jr., "Ephesus," pp. 542-549.

¹⁰ Hubert M. Martin, "Artemis," in David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1 (New York NY: 1992), pp. 464-465.

The church in Ephesus where Timothy served would have lived in the overwhelming atmosphere generated by Artemis and her temple. The worship of Artemis was dominated by female virgins dedicated to the goddess and at one point in history male eunuchs (castrated males) who largely controlled the great wealth and power of this institution, making it a female dominated institution.¹¹ The castrated males appear to have dropped out of fashion many centuries before Paul visited the city.¹² A point of interest in our study is the data regarding the number of “Asiarchs” (Ἀσιαρχῶν) in Ephesus, as are described in Acts 19:31: we now have evidence of 106 “Asiarchs” in Ephesus and this number included both men and women. “Asiarchs” served some religious functions along with their official role in serving as officials at festivals and events in the city.¹³ The fact that some women served in such roles is an indication of the freedom and power that women possessed in Ephesus.

¹¹ Bobby Valentine, “First Timothy 2.8-15 & the Silencing of Women in Worship,” *Stoned-Campbell Disciple* (2013) 20th of February, <http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2013/02/20/first-timothy-2-8-15-the-silencing-of-women-in-worship/>.

¹² Christine M. Thomas, “Ephesus: Metropolis of Asia,” in Helmut Koester, ed., *Ephesos Metropolis of Asia*, in the Harvard Theological Studies series, Vol. 41 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 81-117.

¹³ John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament*, p. 255.

Witherington says that a case can be made for the fact that some of these women of high status in Ephesus became Christians and would have expected to hold important religious roles within the Christian community, based on the roles they held before becoming Christians. The problem is that such women have not yet been fully instructed in apostolic teachings.¹⁴ We have Paul's answers to questions from Timothy and we must speculate, from the evidence, regarding the nature and content of the questions and problems that Paul was addressing. The assumptions made will be critical in the understanding that one takes away from 1 Timothy.

Let us explore briefly some ways that we have made assumptions in the past as we have interpreted 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and then built upon our interpretation as if it were solid fact. These interpretations have led to the silencing of women and to the removal of a great many service opportunities for women within the church. For example, one assumption made is that the setting that Paul is addressing here is indeed a public worship service. Christians did not build dedicated church buildings until

¹⁴ Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, Vol. 1 (Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic, 2006), p. 232.

after the Edict of Toleration in 313 A.D. Before this time Christian communal worship was held in private homes.¹⁵

The primary issue of 1 Timothy 2 is prayer. The traditional reading of this text makes the assumption that the setting for this prayer is in the public worship assembly. The problem with such an assumption is that neither in 2:1 nor in 2:8 is there any indication that the prayer here is spatially, or temporally restricted to church meetings. The teaching of Paul elsewhere stresses prayer and the giving of thanks at all times (Romans 1:9-10; Ephesians 1:16; 6:18; Philippians 1:4; 4:6; Colossians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:3, 11; Philemon 4), which would not be limited to a specific time, or location, such as a church meeting. In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul specifically instructs men to pray “in every place” (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ - *en panti topo*). This is a spatial reference: for other nonrestricted references to prayer in every place, or at all times, see 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:3.¹⁶

¹⁵ Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Sacra Pagina Series, Vol. 12 (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), p. 65.

¹⁶ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2016), pp. 286-287.

There is nothing in 1 Timothy 2:1-8 that would narrow the focus to such a degree that the context must be understood exclusively as a “public worship service.”¹⁷ If this assumption cannot be maintained, then nothing in this chapter can be tied specifically to what we today would specify as a formal public worship setting.¹⁸ Instead, what we have here are general instructions that apply at all times in all settings. The context of chapter 2 (2:1) is with regard to “supplications” (δέσεις - *deeseis*), “prayers” (προσευχὰς - *proseuchas*), “intercessions” (ἐντεύξεις - *enteuxeis*), and “thanksgivings” (εὐχαριστίας - *eucharistias*), being “made for everyone” with the goal being “a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity” (2:2). Each of these words indicates prayer, and in certain settings each word might be translated simply as prayer. Here they are intended to designate prayer in all its forms.

At 2:8 the focus is upon “men” praying without “anger or argument.” Next there is the word that is translated as “also that” (ὡσαύτως - *Hosautos*) that literally means “likewise,”

¹⁷ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, p. 287.

¹⁸ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, p. 287.

“similarly,” or, “in the same way.” Here, similar to Paul’s concern about men praying, he has some concerns about women (2:9). His concern does not seem to simply be with a “worship” setting alone. Women are to dress appropriately to their station as Christians, not just at worship gatherings, but always. Their lives are to be characterized by modesty and not by extravagance and luxury.¹⁹ The ancient Roman world was an honor/shame society. There was a great concern in this society for honor on the one side and on the negative side there was a tremendous potential for the appropriation of shame. There were laws that dictated what women could, and could not, wear. For a woman to dress in a fashion that was considered ornate and perhaps revealing was to bring dishonor upon herself and her family. Such a woman would be considered immoral and seductive in Roman society, thus eliciting shame upon her family. The display of wealth indicated that the person doing it was greedy, immoral, and guilty of exploiting others.²⁰

¹⁹ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, p. 287.

²⁰ Alicia J. Batten, “Neither Gold nor Braided Hair (1 Timothy 2.9: 1 Peter 3.3): Adornment, Gender and Honour in Antiquity,” *New Testament Studies* 55 (2009), pp. 484-501.

In such a society a person's identity depended upon how they were perceived by others. Appearances could either increase honor, or bring shame. Such things were an indication of the character of the person. Seductive or overly ornate clothing brought shame by sending the message that the woman wished to be stared at and that such a person lacked the requisite concern for shame and thus brought dishonor upon her family. For a woman to be accused of *luxuria* (rankness, profusion, extravagance, luxury) was a great dishonor to her and to her family. *Luxuria* was considered to be a disease, a madness, that must be resisted (Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 33.95).²¹ A part of this overly indulgent type of dress included the wearing of gold and silver, pearls, and ornately braided hair. Ancient Rome was a gendered universe and so there was a great deal of inequality in that universe. There was also fear among men of women exerting too much power, or influence. This was especially the case from the second century B.C. onward when it was noted that widows, who had control of property were becoming too powerful and independent.

²¹ Alicia J. Batten, "Neither Gold nor Braided Hair (1 Timothy 2.9: 1 Peter 3.3): Adornment, Gender and Honour in Antiquity," *New Testament Studies* 55 (2009), pp. 484-501.

In a society and a community where it is highly likely that the members of the church did not desire to be perceived as possessed of madness, disease, nor as immoral it seems natural that there might be some concern expressed if people were pushing the envelope, as appears to have been happening in Ephesus. Having women who dressed inappropriately would bring charges of immorality and shame upon the church and almost certainly this will have hurt their witness within the city and the Empire, perhaps even bringing legal retribution. The message sent by women dressing in such a fashion was that they were not under control, they were not pure, and they were immoral. This would certainly have been the perception of the public in the first century.²² The contrast to such perceptions is given in 2:10, where the message of “good works” would profess a proper message for women who exhibit a reverence for God.

At 2:11 the focus of so much attention has been on the prohibitions given to the women while there equally is a more positive aspect in the fact here; the women are challenged to “learn” and Paul assumes this and encourages their learning. In

²² Alicia J. Batten, “Neither Gold nor Braided Hair (1 Timothy 2.9: 1 Peter 3.3): Adornment, Gender and Honour in Antiquity,” *New Testament Studies* 55 (2009), pp. 484-501.

much of the Roman world women learning was discouraged. They are to do so in two ways, first in “quietness” (ἡσυχία - *hesuchia*). The primary meaning of this word is a state of undisturbed quietness, or calm.²³ There are texts where quietness is something that is encouraged of men using the same word as is used here (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:12). The second way they are to learn is stated in the phrase, “in submission” (ὑποταγή - *hupotage*). The Hellenistic concept of “submission” was not so much an expression of obedience to another person as it was a matter of “keeping one’s place,” in order to assure stability and order. “The issue is submitting to the teaching of others and quietly and intently listening to it so that one might learn.”²⁴

At 2:12, we come to one of the most difficult verses in all of Scripture. It is difficult largely because there is a Greek word that is used here (ἀυθεντεῖν - *authentain*) that is not used at any other place in all of Scripture, nor for that fact are there any other undisputed uses of this verb in Greek literature prior to its being

²³ 2 Thessalonians 3:12 - **By the Lord Jesus Christ, we command and encourage such people to work quietly (ἡσυχίας - *hesuchias*) and put their own food on the table.** CEB.

²⁴ Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, Vol. 1, p. 226.

found here. Because of this extreme rarity it is very difficult to determine the exact meaning of this word. The analysis of Westfall is that the basic semantic concept of this word can be described as “*the autonomous use or possession of unrestricted force.*”²⁵ The meaning for this verb is given at *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* as “*to have full power or authority over.*” The secondary meaning is to “*commit a murder.*”²⁶ The verb carries with it the basic meaning of using force and “...outside of absolute authority or full power within a jurisdiction, it will tend to violate laws or social boundaries, rules, commands, or prohibitions.”²⁷ This means that there can be a negative connotation to this word when the one wielding such authority is not God, or a person of absolute authority such as is wielded by a king.

Chrysostom uses this word in writing that the role of the wife is to obey and the husband’s is to love. He then goes on to say, “Therefore, do not ἀυθεντείν (*authentein*) because your wife

²⁵ Cynthia Long Westfall, “The Meaning of ἀυθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2.12*,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*, 10 (2014), pp. 138-173.

²⁶ [http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/Iris/demo/lexica.jsp#qid=31004&ql=AU\)QENTE/W&q=%CE%B1%E1%BD%90%CE%B8%CE%B5%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%AD%CF%89&usr_input=greek](http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/Iris/demo/lexica.jsp#qid=31004&ql=AU)QENTE/W&q=%CE%B1%E1%BD%90%CE%B8%CE%B5%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%AD%CF%89&usr_input=greek).

²⁷ Cynthia Long Westfall, “The Meaning of ἀυθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2.12*,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*, 10 (2014), pp. 138-173.

is submissive to you.”²⁸ It appears that there is a negative aspect to the word here. It expresses an element of being abusive. This word is not just negative when used of women exercising this type of force, but also in the 82 occurrences of the verb that Baldwin uses to support his position²⁹ there is not one single example of “... a male doing this to another person (singular animate goal) or to a group of people (plural animate goal) with a positive evaluation in a ministry or leadership context.” This word was at times used of the power of the trinity and came to be used positively for divine sovereignty, dominion, and sovereign acts as a part of the Trinity’s power, and also of the broad authority ‘in spiritual matters’ by the papacy in later times.³⁰

Payne argues that, ‘Not even one instance of the later ecclesiastical use of ἀυθεντέω with the meaning “to have authority over” or “to exercise authority” has been established

²⁸ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Colossians*, 27-31. μη τοίνυν, ἐπειδὴ ὑποτέτακται ἡ γυνή, ἀυθεντεῖ. Chrysostom was a bishop in Turkey; was born in A.D. 349 and died in A.D. 407.

²⁹ H. Scott Baldwin, “Appendix 2 ἀυθεντέω in Ancient Greek Literature, in Andreas J. Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1995), pp. 269-305.

³⁰ Cynthia Long Westfall, “The Meaning of ἀυθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2.12*,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*, 10 (2014), pp. 138-173.

before or near the time of Paul.³¹ The word has a tendency to have a negative, or pejorative meaning in the majority of the cases when it is used in instances not involving an absolute ruler, or someone who has total control over a given domain. This is a word used in instances where the one using the force does so in a manner that imposes their power over a person against their will. The harm done to the one being acted against can range from dishonor to death. The noun that this verb is derived from can have the meaning of “executioner” or “murderer.” A comparable word to *αὐθεντέω* (*authenteo*) in English would be the word “eradicate,” that can be positive, or negative depending upon the context, but is negative when used against a personal/animate target.³²

Westfall concludes that the meaning of this word as it occurs in 1 Timothy 2:12 is pejorative in sense and involves forcing a person against their will; in a destructive manner that is inconsistent with pastoral ministry either in the first century, or the twenty-first century. No person should exercise power to

³¹ Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2009), p. 373.

³² Cynthia Long Westfall, “The Meaning of *αὐθεντέω* in 1 Timothy 2.12*,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*, 10 (2014), pp. 138-173. To eradicate poverty is positive, while to eradicate people is negative.

harm another within the context of the church. Such actions would be considered abusive by virtually any standards. The use of the English meaning “to exercise authority” either misrepresents, or overextends the meaning of **ἀύθεντέω** (*authenteo*) beyond what has been found in comparable grammatical constructions. “The prevention of abuse is far more likely than a general neutral prohibition of ‘having the authority’ of a master or ‘assuming authority.’”³³ Carroll Osburn would translate **ἀύθεντέω** (*authenteo*) as “to domineer” in 1 Timothy 2:12.³⁴ It is of interest too that in Syriac Peshitta (a second century translation) translates the word **ἀύθεντέω** (*authenteo*) as *marah* (here an Aphel verb- i.e. causative, or emphatic stem³⁵): it means “to venture, dare, be rash, hasty, headstrong or presumptuous.”³⁶ The translators of the Peshitta seem to have captured the negative aspect of this word in their translation.

Osburn interprets this section of Scripture as indicating that women are not to reject the culturally expected roles such as

³³ Cynthia Long Westfall, “The Meaning of ἀύθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2.12*,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*, 10 (2014), pp. 138-173.

³⁴ Carroll D. Osburn, “ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ (1 Timothy 2:12), *Restoration Quarterly* 25 (1982), pp.1-12.

³⁵ Theodore H. Robinson, *Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar*, fourth edition revised by L. H. Brockington (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 72.

³⁶ J. Payne Smith, ed. *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 300.

marriage, childbearing, family life and the many “noble works” accomplished within the traditional role of women. Paul has concern that the women of Ephesus are overturning traditional roles in domineering ways and pursuing traditionally masculine pursuits.³⁷ The women are bringing the church into disrepute and opening the early community of faith to charges of immorality and pursuit of luxury and status. These are all things that are directly counter to the message of the Gospel of Christ. The serious issues here indicate that what is being highlighted is not just related to a “worship” setting, but the prohibitions here may refer to the general domestic situation such as a wife’s abuse of her husband through actions and behavior that would bring dishonor and therefore be considered abusive to her husband, or for that matter any man, even a slave.

At verse 13 Paul uses the conjunction γὰρ - *gar* to connect these two sections, but the logical relationship between the prohibition and the Old Testament narrative must be inferred.³⁸

Osburn indicates that the term γὰρ - *gar* is not used here in an

³⁷ Carroll D. Osburn, “ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ (1 Timothy 2:12), *Restoration Quarterly* 25 (1982), pp.1-12.

³⁸ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, p. 294.

illative sense, to indicate “for,” or “because,” giving the reason for the prohibition, but instead he is simply introducing an example. If this is correct, a translation such as “for example” then giving the example of when Eve acted in a domineering fashion over Adam ensues. There then is no indication here that the allusions to Genesis are meant to have universal significance. It must be noted that in the Greek text 2:12-14 is all one sentence. There are within that sentence four thought units: 1. not to teach; 2. not to domineer; 3. Adam first; 4. Eve deceived. There is a literary structure in the Greek text. In this literary structure there is an “ab,” “ab” layout where things are stated and then the illustrations are given in the same order later. The issue here is the domineering teaching of certain women.³⁹

Paul is certainly not engaging in an exegesis of Genesis 1-3. “Rather, he is using a common Jewish analogy in which Eve was caricatured as a deceived and bumbling fool who constantly led Adam into trouble.”⁴⁰ This can be seen in texts such as Sirach 25:24, **“Sin began with a woman, and because of her all of us**

³⁹ Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church* (Abilene TX: ACU Press, 2001), p. 248.

⁴⁰ Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church*, pp. 248-249.

die.⁴¹ The same type of caricature is made in the first century expansion called the *Life of Adam and Eve* where Eve is assigned responsibility for sin in the world.⁴² In the *Apocalypse of Moses* 32:1-2 Eve acknowledges responsibility for the human dilemma. “So, Paul does not draw from Genesis 1-3 a universal principle from the historical Eve, but an ad hoc analogy from the later caricature of Eve in Jewish tradition.”⁴³

The message then is that these women in Ephesus are deceived by the false teachers and are making a fool of themselves and there is the potential for great damage to be done. The women need to take great care or they will lead others into sin and the church into disrepute. “Paul’s use of this illustration from Genesis underscores the fact that this prohibition against women teaching was not done with reference to hierarchalism. Instead, where the original complementary relationship between men and women is destroyed, as in Ephesus, Paul mandates what is necessary in that particular setting to restore the original pattern.

⁴¹ CEB.

⁴² 44:2.

⁴³ Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church*, p. 249.

It is not necessary or advisable to take this as a general directive to all women everywhere.”⁴⁴

Paul ends the admonition here indicating that women will in fact be saved through giving attention to their traditional roles, here represented by child-bearing. Paul knew which women in Ephesus were acting in this way and so gives this direction for them and not for all women in general. The point is that just as ancient (post fall) Eve was to find her place in society as a mother so too these women should find roles that worked within the culture and society within which they lived.⁴⁵ Some have also found here a reference to the fact that the Messiah was born of a woman and thus brought salvation.⁴⁶

It may be concluded then that the 1 Timothy 2:9-15 was directed to a specific group, with a specific set of problems, in a particular place in the early church. Their problem was in particular misinformed domineering teachers, who were overstepping traditional roles that were likely to bring the church

⁴⁴ Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church*, p. 250.

⁴⁵ Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church*, p. 251.

⁴⁶ Galatians 4:4 - **But when the fulfillment of the time came, God sent his Son, born through a woman, and born under the Law.** CEB.

into disrepute in the community.⁴⁷ In an honor/shame society the actions and attitudes of these women would have been perceived as immoral and dangerous. Had Paul wanted to make it clear that women were not to exercise “authority” over men there was a perfectly good word that Paul in fact uses at 1 Corinthians 7:4 (ἐξουσιάζω - *exousiadzo*), a word that is not rare and subject to being misunderstood.

Osborne ends with: “Put simply, any female who has sufficient and accurate information may teach that information in a gentle spirit to whomever in whatever situation they may be. While the particular situation Paul addresses in 1 Tim arose due to particular *women* who were misinformed and domineering, the point of the text would be equally applicable to any *men* who might be acting similarly.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church*, p. 251.

⁴⁸ Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church*, p. 252.

Synopsis

It is important to remember that Genesis 1 to 3 indicates no hierarchalism between the man and the woman before they sinned. The message of those Scriptures in Genesis 1-3 is that hierarchalism came as the result of sin. As we look at 1 Timothy 2:8-15 it must be remembered that this is the context of Genesis, which was written more than a thousand years before 1 Timothy and therefore Genesis provides context for 1 Timothy and actually all of Scripture.

1 Timothy is a letter written to Timothy by the Apostle Paul while Timothy was serving in Ephesus. The letter is written to address issues in the church that will have been relayed to Paul and he addresses his guidance to Timothy for dealing with the issues raised. Our passage deals first with men praying and then turns to issues that are of concern regarding the women in Ephesus. These issues are not specifically said to be problems that only deal with a worship setting, though this has been inferred by many.

Paul calls upon the women to learn quietly as is fitting to the station of a learner. He does not permit women to domineer over

men, or to teach them when they have not been properly instructed in the teachings of the Apostles (Acts 18:26). Paul would know these things from his communication from Timothy, or others in the church at Ephesus. What is said in 1 Timothy 2:8-15 was specific for the time, place, and culture of the situation in Ephesus and is not something that is binding for all times and in all places. Women, that have been properly instructed can speak and teach the same as a man who has been properly instructed, both should do so in a manner that is appropriate and brings honor to the name of Jesus.

Questions

1. When is a time when you have heard one side of a conversation and later found out that you had come to the wrong conclusion from only hearing one side of the conversation?
2. What are some things that you do not want to change in the world? Why?
3. How does taking something out of context change the meaning of something?
4. What are some ways that we can insure that we understand the proper context of Scripture?
5. What is the Bible's response to the issue of slavery? Do you agree with it? Why, or why not?
6. Why do you think there is a fear of women?
7. What are some assumptions that people have made regarding 1 Timothy 2:8-15? Why do you think they made these assumptions?
8. How would meeting for the worship assembly in a home change the way you see worship? Why?
9. Where are Christians permitted to pray? Why does this matter in our discussion?
10. What message do we see today in the way a person dresses?
11. Do we have an honor/shame society in the United States today? Why, or why not?
12. How important is the perception that the world has of the church? Why?
13. What message are Christians meant to send to the world?

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14. How is that message affected by how we treat one another?
 15. Are there some things that the church does today that are considered immoral by our dominant national culture? If so, what are they?
 16. How are we to balance the influence of culture upon the church, with Biblical teachings?
 17. What are some ways that people coerce others today in ways that are negative?
 18. What is the difference between having “authority” over someone and being “domineering?”
 19. When must we resist the influences of our dominant culture?

To Take Home

What is Important to know?

It is important to know that the words of Paul to Timothy are one side of the conversation and hearing only one side of a conversation means that one must speculate as to what the other side of the conversation is. That means we must be especially careful with personal letters to another person such as the letters to Timothy, Philemon, and Titus. How much weight should be given to interpretations that are based on half the conversation?

Where is God in these words?

It is important to note that there are times when Paul indicates in his writings that he is speaking with the authority that comes from his role as an Apostle of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12; 1 Corinthians 11:23) and other times when he gives his opinion on things (1 Corinthians 7:12). It is important to recognize that in the New Testament we have both types of authority given. One is clearly far more binding on us than the other. One is likely to have universal significance, while the other, the opinions of a man, are likely to be much more about the current situation only. How might we decide which is which?

What does any of this mean for how I live my life?

The calling of Paul in 1 Timothy is the calling for people not to abuse others, or their freedom in Christ in a manner that causes harm to the witness of the church. Sometimes things may be permissible in one culture, but not in another. Sometimes what is permissible in one culture sends a message in the other culture that is damaging and harmful to the mission of the church. What are some things that you see people doing that might harm the mission of the church in our culture today?

What is the word of God calling us to do?

Paul called for the people of the church of Ephesus to recognize that the message that they sent to their community was important and impacted their perceptions of Christ and His message. He calls them to be cognizant of these things and to not do things that would be deemed as immoral, immodest, and indecent. The same calling of Paul applies to us today. What are some ways that the church is in danger of damaging the mission of Christ?