

**1 TIMOTHY**  
**Part Two: Chapter 2:11-15**  
**Pastor Rick Henderson      February 10-11, 2024**

Welcome to week 3 in our series on 1 Timothy. I'd love for you to grab a Bible or pull out your phone and find this passage.

**1 Timothy 2:11-15**

If you are familiar with this text, you probably came today with a mixture of excitement and anxiety. I know that there are many of you who have prayed hard for me this week because you know what a big deal this sermon is. And there might be some of you who are wondering right now, "What is going on here?" If you are a guest today and you have no idea what I'm talking about—believe it or not you may have picked the best weekend ever to visit our church.

We are going to dive into what I'm convinced is the single most controversial passage in the New Testament. Today you get a live look into what we are truly like as a church. Last weekend, our elders announced that they believe women should be able to serve in and occupy any position of leadership at Autumn Ridge. We've tried to get that information out. I hope this isn't the first you've heard it. But if it is, we're talking about that today. That's what this passage is all about.

**1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15** *A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.*

There is significant disagreement over how to best understand what we just read. While there is nuance, the disagreement can be divided into two major groups. One group reads this and concludes that there should be restrictions on women regarding teaching and leadership of men. The other group reads this and concludes there should NOT be restrictions on women regarding teaching and leadership of men.

For the majority of my life and the majority of my career as a pastor, my default setting was that there should be restrictions on women regarding teaching and leadership of men. It's what I was taught. It's what I believed. It's what I taught others to believe. To be completely candid with you, I never even considered the other side. Whenever I thought about this subject, I always and only tried to better understand the view that said there should be restrictions on women.

Six or seven years ago I found myself infected by an annoying question that I couldn't ignore. Has there ever been a question that wouldn't let you go, it was as if the question burrowed its way into your brain and wouldn't relent until answered? This was the question. How is it, that people who love and revere God's word just as much as I do, believe that women can teach and lead and be elders or pastors? So, I decided to take a new approach. Instead of making assumptions about them, I wanted to understand what it was that convinced them.

What I discovered is that the affirmation of women as teachers and leaders is a very old, historic position. It predates the rise of feminism by centuries. There is a biblical case to be made, and there are serious, Jesus-loving scholars who support women as teachers and leaders.

Some of you are thinking, how can that be? It's so clear. Just look at it!

**1 TIMOTHY 2:11-12** *A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.*

I agree that it looks pretty clear. If this is all we had to go on, my mind would not have changed to affirm women equally as teachers and leaders, with no restrictions. But this isn't all there is. One of the things that I love and admire about you guys is that you make it safe to be honest, vulnerable, and messy. Are you all still good with being so honest with ourselves that it might get messy?

#### **CLEAR STATEMENTS:**

Here's four clear statements from 1 Timothy 2. Why do we pretend that only one of them is clear? Why do people join churches or leave churches based on just one of these statements, instead of all four?

- Men are to pray with hands lifted up.

I've noticed that no man in here prays with his hands literally lifted up. Yes, that means I opened my eyes during prayer. It says it clearly. Why don't people get as animated about this one? We aren't following what the Bible clearly says. In all sincerity, what's the deal with picking and choosing which clear statement to follow and which clear statement to ignore?

- Women are not to have elaborate hairstyles, wear jewelry, or expensive clothes.

I've noticed that some of you ladies have nice hair, and you're probably dropping some nice coin on that. Did you know that women wear jewelry at our church? Many of you have lovely clothes. But it clearly says this.

- A woman is not to teach or have authority over a man.
- Women are saved through childbearing.

This clearly says that women are saved through giving birth. It's clear, right? Does anybody in here believe that's how women are saved? This is where we have to get really honest with ourselves, even if it's messy. This is what most people do. These statements are explained away culturally. This statement is taken literally. And this statement is ignored altogether. C'mon. Does that make sense to anybody? Is that taking the Bible seriously?

When this process started for me about seven years ago, I had to admit to myself that I was picking and choosing which clear statements I was applying and which clear statements I was ignoring. And I don't think I'm the only one. So, what do we do? Instead of picking and choosing which parts we are going to take seriously—let's take it all seriously.

Right now, I'm going to share with you things that have helped me and things that have challenged me. I'm going to tell you what I think and why I've changed what I think. There's going to be a wide range of agreement and disagreement in this room. That's totally OK. You can come up to me and tell me that you disagree with me and you are not going to hurt my feelings. I'm working on launching my third teenager. I'm used to being disagreed with. Disagreement is not just allowed, it's welcomed.

- Our unity is based on being in Christ, not being in agreement.
- God's Word is inspired, not our interpretation of it. ***I could be wrong.***

Believe it or not, it's not my goal to convince you as much as it is my goal to share what convinced me. I want to share what convinced the majority of guys on the elder board of our church. If I can be this bold, there is something I want to try to convince everyone to agree on.

- The people with whom you disagree have biblical reasons for their view. Not just one side, both sides.

In their attempt to take the bible seriously, they have landed at a different conclusion. That doesn't mean that everyone is right. That would be incoherent and nonsensical to say both sides are right. By definition, that can't be the case. But both sides can be on the right track if their doing their best to understand as best they can AND to hold on to each other in unity as we all hold on to the view that are convinced is best. N.T. Wright is a brilliant scholar. Talking about this subject, he said this.

*Live in such a way that we don't make demands on one another's conscience, but we may make demands on one another's charity. –N.T. Wright*

Mmm. That's good! Let's hold on to each other in love and unity, while we all hold on to the view that we are convinced is best. Now, the art and science of interpretation is called hermeneutics. Today is going to feel like Hermeneutics 101. I think it will be fun, challenging, and extremely helpful.

**HERMENEUTICS 101:** Understanding the text is always **POSSIBLE**, but it's not always **EASY**.

There are factors at play that work against our ability to understand the Biblical text.

- Original Language
- Cultural Context
- Historical Context
- Literary Context

All of those factors can be investigated, understood and taken into account. But it's never going to happen on accident. It takes intentionality and it takes work. But if we don't do the work, we can't expect to understand.

**1 TIMOTHY 2:11** *A woman should learn in **quietness** and full **submission**.*

Is so easy, in fact it's stupidly easy to read this verse as saying, "Women should be silent when they learn and in full submission to men." But that's not what it says and that's not what it means. This word *quiet* does not mean volume. It doesn't have anything to do with how much you talk or how loud you talk.

This is the same word from verse 2 that says, we should pray for kings and those in authority so that we may live peaceful, quiet lives. *Quiet* is about a disposition of peace.

And it doesn't say that a woman should be submissive to a man or to men. It just says that she should have a disposition of submission. For what it's worth, that's a command for all believers. Even Jesus practiced humble submission.

Bill Mounce is probably the most trusted Greek scholar in our country. His textbook is used to teach 90% of Greek students in America. I was taught Greek with his textbook. I want to share with you what he has to say about this passage and why he changed his mind **after** publishing a commentary on it.

*When talking about women in Ephesian leadership, Paul starts by saying, "A woman should learn in quietness, in all submissiveness."...But submissive to whom...In my commentary, I focus on the object of the women's submissiveness. Submissive to whom?*

- *Submissive to her husband?*
- *Submissive to every man — absolutely not. Robin (my wife) is never required to be submissive to any one man.*
- *Submissive to all men — absolutely not.*
- *Submissive to the elders (as a group)? That **was** my conclusion.*

***I was always uncomfortable with that conclusion since it isn't what the text actually says...Maybe what Paul is requiring is a submissive character. Many (if not most) of the other instructions to women have to do with character...In fact, the majority of the requirements for elders have to do with character and not activities. —Bill Mounce***

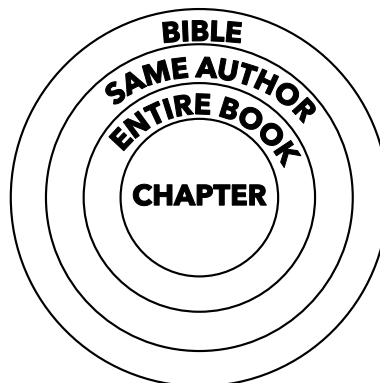
So far, there really isn't a difference of expectations or commands between men and women. Both sexes are to learn. Both sexes are to embrace a peaceful, quiet disposition. Both are to be submissive. Jesus is the model of all of that. But what about this verse?

**1 TIMOTHY 2:12** *I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.*

Again, it's the same word for quiet as above. It doesn't mean silent. It means peaceful. Here is the million-dollar question. How can a church like ours, who says that we submit to the Bible, endorse women as teachers and leaders when this seems so clear?! It's time for more hermeneutics.

**HERMENEUTICS 101:** Context is **SUPREME**.

I've got an image that will help you understand what I mean. These are the circles of Biblical context.



For an interpretation to be accepted it has to fit in all the circles of context. It can't contradict the immediate chapter or the rest of the book. It can't contradict other things the same author wrote, and it can't contradict what's written in the rest of the Bible. It's not enough for an interpretation to check most of the circles. It's not enough to check 3 out of 4. It fit with all four. If it doesn't, the work isn't done.

The interpretation that says we must restrict women from teaching and leadership does fit in the context of the immediate chapter. You'll see in the coming weeks that it doesn't fit with the rest of the book. Does that interpretation fit with or contradict other things that Paul wrote? That's a decision that each and every one of us has to make. I'll share some things and then you can decide.

In Acts 18 we learn that Priscilla and Aquilla travelled with Paul to Corinth and later to Ephesus. While in Ephesus, which is where Timothy is, Priscilla and Aquilla take on a leadership role among the believers in Ephesus. This is where they met Apollos. Together, they both taught him.

**ACTS 18:26** *When Priscilla and Aquila heard him [Apollos], they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.*

Priscilla, the wife, was named first. That's a big deal and contradicted culture. She taught Apollos, who became a famous preacher. Homes were centers of business, public meetings, and religious gatherings. It would be misguided to assume that they instructed him privately in their house.

Paul made clear that Priscilla and Aquila hosted churches in their homes. There is no reason to assume that this was a private session of instruction between three people. It is just as reasonable, perhaps more so, to conclude that Apollos joined with the congregation, being discipled, under the leadership of both Priscilla and Aquila. In most instances, except when context indicates otherwise, when a home is referenced in the New Testament, we should think church (house church) instead of private residence.

Let's take note that this couple was endorsed by Paul to lead and teach in Ephesus, the same city in which Timothy was leading when he received this letter from Paul. Whatever interpretation we land on, it's our responsibility to fully take into account Priscilla's leadership and teaching ministry in Ephesus.

There's another woman we need to pay attention to. This woman was also empowered and entrusted by Paul. Her name was Phoebe.

**ROMANS 16:1-2** *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.*

The letter to the Roman church was carried by Phoebe. Described as a deacon and a benefactor, she exercised some form of leadership of many people. Carrying this letter to Rome required that she traveled more than 600 miles from her home. It's unlikely that she traveled alone. Paul could have entrusted the letter to any able-bodied man. Yet, he chose her.

The role of letter carrier is especially relevant. The person in this role was expected to represent the writer, to read the letter with all the inflections and intonations of the writer, and answer questions that the recipients may have. Lincoln Blumwell is a scholar and expert ancient Christian documents in the Roman era.

*The letter carrier served to extend and clarify the message so that it was properly contextualized and interpreted in the intended manner by the recipient...[The letter carrier] was thought to be a trusted friend or an associate/agent who could accurately and faithfully relay the oral component of the message. In such cases it even seems that at times the letter carrier acted not just as an intermediary between the sender and recipient but that he was invested with authority to carry on and extend the dialogue and in a way vicariously stood in for the sender who could not be physically present. –Lincoln Blumwell*

Romans is the largest, most theologically complex, and most expensive letter sent to a church in the New Testament. Paul entrusted it to a woman. While we don't with 100% certainty, the evidence of history suggests that the first person to ever teach and expound on Romans was a woman named Phoebe.

Whatever interpretation we come to on what Paul meant about not letting women teach or exercise authority, it's our responsibility to take fully into account his affirmation of Phoebe as a leader and his personal representative in answering questions and explaining Romans.

There's even more.

**1 CORINTHIANS 11** – Women pray and prophesy in the church.

Go read it. Don't get distracted by head coverings. Focus on what's clear. Paul expected that women would and prophesy in the church. With that in mind, read this.

**1 CORINTHIANS 14:31** *For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be **instructed** and encouraged.*

I am fully aware that this doesn't answer all the questions. There's a whole bunch that has to be explained. For now, let's focus on what's clear.

- Paul expected women to prophesy in the church.
- The purpose of prophecy is instruction (**teaching**).

Whatever interpretation we come to on what Paul meant about not letting women teach or exercise authority, it's our responsibility to take fully into account his affirmation that women should prophesy for the purpose of instructing and encouraging the church—men included.

There's one more thing we need to look at.

**1 CORINTHIANS 16:15-16** *You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, to **submit** to such people and **to everyone who joins in the work and labors** at it.*

Paul urged all believers to submit to all who work and labor within a local church. Just as it was appropriate to submit to Stephanas, a male leader of a church in Achaia, Paul urged all to submit to all the other co-workers and laborers as well.

We don't have to guess who the workers and laborers are that Paul wants all believers to submit to. He lists them. Here are some of the people that Paul specifically names as workers who labor in ministry.

**WORKERS & LABORERS**

- Priscilla
- Aquila
- Mary
- Andronicus
- Junia
- Urbanus
- Tryphaena
- Tryphosa
- Persis
- Timothy

The highlighted names are women, who Paul commends as co-workers and co-laborers. Let's remember, he urged all believers to submit to all who join in the work and labor at it. What happens if we take that seriously?

1. Paul urged that all believers submit to all co-workers who labor in ministry.
2. Whoever Paul identifies as a co-worker who labors in ministry should be submitted to by all believers.
3. Paul identified numerous women as co-workers who labor in ministry.
4. Paul urged that all believers submit to numerous women who labor in ministry.
5. Therefore, Paul urged that men submit to women who labor in ministry.

Whatever interpretation we come to on what Paul meant about not letting women teach or exercise authority, it's our responsibility to take fully into account his urging of all believers, men included, to submit to women who join the work and labor in ministry.

If you're feeling confused, that's OK. This takes work. Which means it also takes time. If you're feeling like Paul is contradicting himself. I can understand that thought, but I don't believe he is contradicting himself. This is where understanding hermeneutics really does help.

**HERMENEUTICS 101:** We always interpret the **UNCLEAR** in light of the **CLEAR**.

You have to make a decision. You have to make a judgment call. Which is more clear?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Priscilla was a church leader who taught Apollos.</li><li>• Phoebe was a church leader who was entrusted with Romans and was likely the first person to answer questions and explain Romans.</li><li>• Paul expected women to prophesy for the purpose of instruction and encouragement.</li><li>• Paul urged all believers, even men, to submit to women who labor in ministry.</li></ul>	<p><b>1 TIMOTHY 2:11-12</b> <i>A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.</i></p>
--	--

Is this more clear than this? Or, is this more clear than this? That's the decision, that's the judgment call that every one of us has to make. I'm not going to tell you what to think. I will tell you what I think. I will

tell you what which way of thinking led our elder board to affirm that women can serve in and occupy all positions of leadership.

The weight of the left side appears to be more clear. I could be wrong. We could be wrong. You could be wrong. But wherever you land in this process of interpretation, I hope that you can see that we are not asking you to ignore the Bible or to not take parts of it seriously. Just the opposite. It's our intent to take all of it with the upmost seriousness.

**1 TIMOTHY 2:12** *I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.*

The grammar of this sentence in Greek, the original language, reads like this, "I am not permitting a woman to teach or assume authority over a man."

It's not even a command. It was something that he was not currently permitting. Was that intended to be a permanent restriction or a temporary restriction? That's something we have to decide. That's part of the work of interpretation. Was it temporary or permanent? This is why I think it was a temporary restriction.

- False teaching was running rampant in the church.
- People, especially women, had not been taught the gospel.
- Men were fighting.
- Women, who hadn't yet learned the gospel, were using their status to impose themselves as leaders.

The women who haven't been taught need to be taught—equal access to education as men. This is not the only place that people who are not educated yet can't teach or lead. We're going to see that in the next chapter, next week. First learn, then lead.

Maybe you don't agree with that because of how this verse looks in English.

**1 TIMOTHY 2:12** *I do not permit a woman to teach or to **assume authority** over a man; she must be quiet.*

It's completely understandable to think Paul is against women having leadership over men. The problem is, that's not really what that word means. Assume authority in Greek is just one word. And it looks like this.

**αυθεντειν**

This is an extremely rare word. In fact, this is the only time this word is used anywhere in the Bible. The most common word authority in Greek is this.

**εξουσια**

It's the word that Jesus used to describe his authority. It's the most common word used to describe the authority of church leaders and government leaders. Exsousia means authority in the same way we



mean it. Authentein has a wide range of meanings, one of which is murder. It's not a positive word. It's negative word, like domineer or usurp.

Did you know that Paul taught that women do get to have exsousia over men? The longest teaching on husband and wives in the New Testament is 1 Corinthians 7. In it, Paul wrote that husbands have exsousia, authority over their wives bodies. And, check this out, wives have exsousia, authority over their husbands bodies. In his most clear writings, Paul taught that men and women had authority over each other.

So, why did he use this word? Paul is not allowing women to use their wealth and social status to domineer in the church. That's not acceptable behavior form women or men. One of my favorite pastors of all time was John Chrysostom. He was a native Greek speaker. He thought in Greek. He preached in Greek. I want you to hear how he used this very same word, authentein.

*A husband should not αυθεντει his wife. —John Chrysostom*

This is an approach to leadership or power that is wrong for everyone and violates the way of Jesus. Non one, absolutely no one should ever domineer, usurp, abuse, or try to take control. That's anti-gospel.

So, why did Paul write, I don't permit a woman to teach or to authentein over a man? There is something called an oude clause. What that means is that the two verbs, "teach" and "assume authority" can be understood as one thing. We do that all the time also. Imagine a teacher said this to a disrespectful and disruptive student.

*I'm not going to let you walk in here and disrupt my class.*

Is any reasonable person going to conclude that the teacher is not permitting her students to walk? No. That's ridiculous. She's saying, "You can't enter in a disruptive way and engage in disruptive behavior." In the view that I'm sharing with you, that's exactly the kind of thing that Paul was not permitting.

**1 TIMOTHY 2:13-15** *For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.*

The historical and cultural context is critical. There were two kinds of false teaching that are addressed by what Paul wrote here. The first is an early form of Gnosticism and the other is worship of the goddess Artemis.

Gnostics believed that Eve was made before Adam. The cult of Artemis believed that Artemis was the firstborn. Paul is correcting two expressions of false teaching at the same time. God created the man and then the woman.

Gnosticism taught that Adam was the one who was deceived and Eve wasn't even there when Adam sinned. Again, Paul is correcting false teaching. I don't believe that Paul is using the order of creation to teach that women should be restricted. He is using creation to show that women don't get to domineer or have a privileged position over men. I'm convinced that Paul is referencing what happened in the

garden to show what happens when people are deceived. That's why learning should come before leading.

Paul never rooted deception in gender. Both men and women were equally vulnerable, as seen in his second letter to the church in Corinth.

**2 CORINTHIANS 11:2-4** *I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that **just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.** For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.*

Paul wrote that the Corinthians were vulnerable to deception like Eve. That wasn't a passage for only the ladies. It was to the entire church. Deception and vulnerability to false teaching is not a feature of gender, it's the result of underdeveloped discernment, making one unprepared to withstand and refute false teaching, which is birthed from the lies of Satan. It would be odd to conclude that all Corinthian believers are now permanently barred from teaching or exercising their gifts.

The antidote to deception is truth. That is why Paul commanded (the lone command of 1 Timothy 2) for women or a woman to be educated.

1. Eve was insufficiently prepared to resist the lies of Satan.
2. Eve was deceived and then sinned.
3. Therefore, all believers (in this case, women) need to be educated or they will be vulnerable to deception like Eve.

The emphasis of 1 Timothy as a whole AND chapter 2, in particular, is not gender roles. The emphasis is the danger of Satanic or demonic deception. Both women and men are vulnerable to deception by not being taught the truth or failing to remember the truth they were taught.

So, what about the very last sentence?

**1 TIMOTHY 2:13-15** *For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.*

For much of human history, childbirth has been very dangerous for women. I'm told it's painful. Obviously, I've never given birth. But I have had a cold, so I can relate.

Artemis was believed to be the one who protected women and ensured their safety in childbirth. She carried a bow and arrows dipped in poison that would quickly, and painlessly kill. It was believed that she euthanized women who weren't going to live. She was ferociously adored and revered in Ephesus.

Don't you think it's likely that women who are now following Jesus might try to hedge their bets by appealing to Artemis, too, when they gave birth? Absolutely. We do that all the time.

- We trust Jesus, right? But we also trust money.
- We trust Jesus, right? But we also trust in political power.
- We trust Jesus, right? But we also trust getting our way.

We're all vulnerable to this. This doesn't mean that women will be acceptable to Jesus and worthy of salvation if they have enough kids and stay holy. This was a beautiful and urgent promise to the women of Ephesus that even if they died in childbirth, they would be safe or saved. They could trust in Jesus and let go of the false promises of Artemis.

I know that we've covered a lot. More than you can process in one sitting. However long it takes, let's do the work of interpretation and understanding. Wherever you may land, may we all hold on to each other with love and unity while we hold on to the understanding that we think is best.

Let's not make demands of another's conscience. But we can make demands of each other's charity.