

Shepherds & Servants 6

Partner With Women In Ministry

1 Timothy 2:9-15

Memory Verses: Titus 2:3-4

ELEMENTS

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

We have the book of 1 Timothy because Paul wrote a letter to the elder—the spiritual shepherd—of Ephesus, Timothy, to teach him how a biblical church should function. The people of the church, and most importantly the elders and deacons of the church, should do these things; 1) protect the Gospel, 2) praise God for his mercy, 3) hold to the faith, 4) pray for the people, and 5) know and obey God's call on our lives. I feel that all of this, though simplistic and expected, is foundational and non-negotiable. So far Paul has not led us too far off the path of notions which are agreed upon by all true Christians regardless of their denomination.

However, today we will venture into the proverbial weeds; so to speak. Today, I will attempt to tackle an issue, which we have looked at before. But, whereas before we hit this issue from angles, today we will hit it head on. Today doctrines will be tested. Faith will be stretched. And in an attempt to find the truth of scripture, we will have to dismiss pre-conceived notions, traditions, and opinions. Today we will be looking at what I believe is one of the hardest passages in the entire Bible to exegete. Today we will be looking at what Paul says to Timothy, concerning women's roles in the local church in **1 Timothy 2:9-15**. Go ahead and read that with me if you will.

There is so much to unpack here, but let me give you some hints before we do. What the scripture appears to say at face value is not all as it appears. In order to decode this portion of scripture we will have to look at the full counsel of scripture concerning this topic. Secondly, after looking at all we need to in order to best interpret what the passage says here, we will also see that there is not just an allowance for women to serve in ministry, but there is a mandate for women to serve in the ministry of the local church. And for the elders and the deacons to best shepherd and serve the body, they must partner with women in ministry.

Without women serving in ministry, the church would be weak and incomplete.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see here is that... **Women Minister Through Their Appearance In Church**. Let's start in **1 Timothy 2:9-10**. And look, we are already in the weeds and anything I say in comment to

these verses will make someone mad. So here goes. Women look good. It's the way God designed it. Men look like burly sacks of potatoes and smell like old cheese. Not me of course, I'm talking about Don. But women, as the Bible says, are pleasing to the eyes. They smell good, dress good, and attract the male species like a moth to a flame. Exhibit A; Lisa Sloane is stone cold fox. She sizzles like a plate of bacon. She hasn't aged a day in 30 years and I love it when people mistake me for her father. Cause that's how daddy roles. Gross right? But that's what women do to us.

And whether you like it or not, women can be a distraction. You've all seen the comedy cliché where some dude is working heavy equipment and then a very good looking woman walks by and he can't take his eyes off her and wrecks the whole jobsite. You've all seen the cartoon where Bugs Bunny sees Lola Bunny and his tongue rolls out a mile and is ran over by a train. We can't not look ladies. So I get it. I get why Muslims make their women cover up from head to toe. If they weren't they'd never make it to Mecca. How do you expect them to pray 5 times a day when there are women around showing their ankles? Not gonna happen. Of course I'm joking but there is some truth here. Women can be very distracting and God designed it that way.

So when it comes to worship, God is saying that women should do all they can to refrain from being a distraction; first to men, and also to their fellow women. When we come together to worship, who is the focus on? Jesus right? Or at least it should be. That's why I don't like clapping for someone who has sung really well. If I'm going to clap it's going to be for the Lord. That's why I don't like doing the pledge of allegiance to the flag. If we are going to pledge allegiance in worship, it's going to be to Christ. Does that make sense? **Anything that distracts from worshipping Christ should be muted as best as possible.** The verses we looked at show us the ways that women can become a distraction by what they wear.

First, they can be a distraction by flaunting their wealth in what they wear. In Paul's day, a nice dress for a woman could cost a year's wages. If someone came in wearing a dress costing three years wages it would start conversations and distract from worshipping Christ. Paul isn't saying don't have wealth. He's saying, don't take the focus off of Christ and place it on yourself by flaunting the drip. Leave your bling at home. One who would seek to get attention by wearing very expensive clothes or jewelry obviously cares less for the glory of God than they do their own glory. This isn't just distracting but sinful.

Secondly, they can be a distraction by flaunting their sexuality in what they wear. Let's be clear, skin is a problem for guys. A leg, an arm, a foot, a neck... do I have to keep saying it, women look good. And though I don't believe in the slightest that women must be covered from head to toe, women should recognize that showing too much skin can be distracting to their male brothers. Paul says to dress modestly. So let me put this in

today's terminology. Don't dress for worship like you are going for a swim or to the club. For the most part, women pick a swimsuit because of how it may catch some looks. They wear the low hanging crop top and mini skirt to the club to catch some attention. At church, you should not be getting the attention, it should be Jesus alone! And I know that in our current feminist culture that I'm going to hear, "what about the man's responsibility to not look?, why can't we be feminine and men have self-control." Listen, I agree. Men need to learn to not look and have self-control. If a brother lusts after a sister he has sinned and should be held accountable. Period. But ladies, quit being silly. When you dress that way, you know what you are doing. Help a brother out. That's all we are asking. **When you dress appropriately to worship with the body of Christ you are ministering to the church. Rather than being a distraction you are a role model of godliness.** When you dress properly you serve your faith family and complete the worship experience. **Without women serving in ministry, the church would be weak and incomplete.**

The second thing we need to see here is that... **Women Minister Through Supplemental Service In Church.** Oh Boy, here we go! Let's look again at **1 Timothy 2:11-13.** The word I used here is supplemental. Accordign to the Oxford dictionary, supplemental means – "a provision in addition to what is already present or available to complete or enhance it." Meaning without it, we are incomplete. But it is not the primary means of completion. Let me explain. According to **verse 12** God's primary means of ministry in the local church is through men. Men alone are to be Elders. Men alone are to be seen as the primary teachers of scripture and doctrine. Men are to serve as the primary spiritual shepherds and sacrificial servants of the church. This is both good and bad. In one aspect they get to have more of the lead role in ministry. But they also have to shoulder more of the responsibility.

But that doesn't mean that women aren't allowed to serve in ministry. It simply means they are to serve in a supplemental role. Look at **verse 11.** Women are to learn. Women serve in the worship service by being disciplined through the teaching of the word of God. This is actually exceptional in Paul's day. The Jews did not want their women to be taught the Torah or doctrines. That was for their husbands alone. The Greeks didn't respect women enough to care about their educations. Why did women need to learn anything when there were men around. The Christian church knew, based upon the teachings found in the Old Testament, that women not could learn but were commanded to do so.

Women ministered through learning, and women ministered through submissive service. Again, in our current feminist culture this one stings. How dare a woman be submissive to a man. Snap, snap, snap. Calm down Karen, and let me explain. First off, every believer is

called to be submissive. Men are to be submissive to their wives by protecting them, loving them, and if needs be dying for them as Christ died for the church. Look at **Ephesians 5:25.** Men are to be submissive to every brother and sister in the church by serving them and looking out for their interests above themselves. Look at **Philippians 2:3.** Men are to be submissive to the lost to the point of sacrificing their own lives to share the Good News. Look at **Luke 9:24.**

Secondly, when God says that women are to learn in submissiveness to the elders of their local church, this doesn't mean they have to do everything they say and have lost their autonomy in the church body. That's absurd. God has created us all as equals in Christ and has given us all unique gifts, talents, and opinions to enhance the work of the Gospel. Submissiveness simply means that you know that you are not called to the role of primary spiritual leader and that you are willing to give spiritual authority to those who have been called to lead you. Let's just be clear. I can call myself a leader and elder of this church, but if you don't surrender spiritual authority to me and refuse to follow where I lead then I am not a leader! We can ordain elders and deacons and give them roles of leadership, but if you don't submit to their leadership then it doesn't work.

The only way ministry works in the local church is when we faithful people willingly give spiritual authority to those God has called to lead them.

Women minister in the church like all lay leaders do in the church, by serving where needed. And this means that women can teach too! When it says "I do not permit a woman to teach," it has qualifiers that need to be mentioned. You can't separate that part from the part that says "exercise authority over a man." Meaning again that women cannot serve as elders or teach as though they were the primary spiritual leaders of the church. They can teach, but not as though they have authority over the elders. If the elders ask a woman to speak or teach in the local church, the authority is still with the elder. For those who say women cannot teach in the primary worship service I would ask how that defies this verse if they are asked to speak by the elders of the church? For those who say that women must never teach or speak in church, which is clearly not what is being communicated here, I must ask how you get around verses like **Titus 2:3-4, 1 Corinthians 11:5, Acts 2:17.** Are we to suggest that 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul says that we are all members of the body of Christ and have all been given gifts of the spirit for the sake of the body, is only referring to men. What do we do with the Old Testament Prophetesses of which there are at least 4. Or the fact that Deborah was called to be a Judge over Isreal. Or the fact that there are entire books of the Bible dedicated to women like Esther and Ruth whose servant like ministries were more impactful than a thousand sermons. Or the fact that Jesus had women as part of his entourage throughout his three years of ministry? Who were the first to see him risen? Who were the first to tell of his resurrection? Should they have

kept silent? NO WAY! The point of this passage and passages like it such as **1 Corinthians 14:34** is that women aren't to stay silent and never have roles of ministry in the church. The point, taking the full counsel of scripture, is that...women most certainly can **speak, teach, and lead in the church**, as long as they have the **authority of the elders**, a role that is **reserved specifically for men**. Where would we be in our churches today if it weren't for the faithful women who teach our kids classes, lead our women's bible studies, lead our women's d-groups, and help lead our students towards a closer walk with Christ? Where would we be without the faithful women who have lead us in our worship ministries throughout the years? Could Stone Creek, or any church by that means, effectively minister in evangelism or discipleship if it weren't for the faithful women who invite their neighbors and begin relationships with their lost coworkers? We must partner with our women and we must entrust them with ministry for we have all been called to share the good news. We've all been called to preach the Gospel. We've all been called to the great commission. Women may not be able to be elders but how can they not be anything but supplemental ministers? **Without women serving in ministry, the church would be weak and incomplete.**

Lastly, we need to see that... **Women Minister Through Motherhood In The Home**. We finish in **verse 15**. Though we are fallen creatures who have sinned and been deceived by the enemy, women are blessed through the ministry of motherhood. I know God has not called all women to this ministry as biological mothers. Some women simply cannot have children. But as women, God has called all of you to the ministry of motherhood. For biological mothers, your first ministry is to your children. Teach them about faith in God. Teach them about Jesus' love for us. Teach them about God's holiness. Teach them how to have self-control. **You may not be able to be the primary teacher or an elder in your local church, but you are an elder and teacher to your children...** don't neglect this ministry. For you non-biological mothers, if you adopt kids into your family... all the same applies to you as well. Your primary ministry is to your children. But there is a third category. You may not have biological children or adopted children, but you sure can be a surrogate mother to those who don't have that Christian mother in their lives. My mom took multiple boys into her home and under her wing as a mother. Chuck and Timmy and Forest and Stephen and Danny are my brothers because in many ways we have the same mother. My mom always understood the responsibility to spiritual motherhood. My mom was a minister of great magnitude. Last month my mom was remarried and who married her? Her surrogate son Chuck. And who was there? Timmy and Danny. The point is this ladies. You don't have to carry the title of Pastor, elder, or deacon to have a ministry with eternal impact!

Simply serve where you can, when you can, with the power of Christ. We need you! We can't do it without you! **Without women serving in ministry, the church would be weak and incomplete.**

Application

There is so much more to this discussion than we have time for. Paul does say that women must be quiet, silent, and not talk. Obviously there is more to this issue than simply elder authority. Yes, but ultimately it boils down to correct order in the church. Women, just like men, who speak out of turn, without the authority of the elders, are out of order. If I had to make a short and sweet statement to sum up everything it would be this... women can serve in all ministries with the authority of the elders except the role of elder. You may ask, what about deacons. Well that is another ball of wax. Question, does your deacons function as elders? Then no! Does your deacons function as servant leaders in a role reserved for men? Then no! Does the word deacon mean servant and can women be servants... then yes! Is all of this pretty messy with some nuance... yes. Otherwise we wouldn't be so keen to point out the messiness of it.

Conclusion

Regardless, I think we can all agree that the Bible is putting an emphasis on the fact that women are supplemental to the elders in ministry. Women have a role in ministry which touches all facets of ministry except eldership. We need women in ministry. We must partner with women in ministry. And women should not feel discouraged from getting involved in the work of the Gospel and the great commission. In most churches women are the best teachers, the best prayer warriors, the best financial people, the best administrators, the most mission minded, and the most loyal. **Without women serving in ministry, the church would be weak and incomplete.**