

God's Pattern for a Godly Woman

1 Timothy 2:9-15

It is one of the most controversial subjects in the church today: the role of women in the church. Where are the passages in the Bible that speak to the role of women in the church? In addition to 1 Timothy 2:9-15, you can also note these texts: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; Titus 2:3-5. What about the home? We also have particular texts that speak to the role of women: Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Peter 3:1-6. In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul gives a single word of admonition to the men, then goes into a more lengthy admonition to the women. He then comes back in chapter 3 and addresses men in the leadership assignment of the elder or the pastor. Beginning with verse 8 he says, "I desire therefore that the men pray 1) everywhere, (picking up on the theme of 2:1 where he says therefore "I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men"). He is using the word generically there. But now in verse 8 he is speaking to men in the church and he says that the men should pray 1) everywhere, 2) lifting up holy hands, and 3) they should do without wrath, without anger, and also without doubting. Evidently some were not conducting themselves within the church as they ought. Paul recognizes the way to get them right in their heart is to get them on their knees praying, and he says if you will indeed pray in the right way the issues of wrath and doubting will also dissipate as well. Then verse 9, "in like manner also," in other words in a similar pattern, "let the women adorn themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing godliness with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man but to be in silence for Adam was formed first and then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman

being deceived fell into transgression. Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with self control.”

The basic thrust of this text is not hard to figure out, but there are a number of interpretive landmines along the way. Reading the *NLT* I believe catches some of the nuances of what Paul is trying to say: “In every place of worship I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God free from anger and controversy. And I want women to be modest in their apparel. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair, or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes, for women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do.” I think that catches exactly what Paul is getting at in terms of the way a woman should dress herself.

Then he says women should learn “quietly.” Notice it is not the word “silence,” but the word “quietly.” Most New Testament scholars believe this is a much better translation. So women should learn quietly and submissively. Do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. “For God made Adam first and afterward he made Eve. It was not Adam who was deceived by Satan, the woman was deceived and sin was the result. But women will be saved through child bearing assuming that they will continue to live through faith, love, holiness and modesty.” And there is actually a marginal reading in the *NLT* that says that “this way they will be a saved by accepting their role as mothers.” The Greek word could also be translated preserved. And so it might be the thought is best expressed that women will be preserved throughout their salvation accepting their role as mothers continuing in faith, love, holiness and modesty.

You will see a chart entitled “Perspective of the Role of Women in the Church.” You will see five basic categories and representatives in each of those categories. Most of these

names will not be familiar to you. You have a thumb sketch on the basic perspective each one has concerning how they view women and the church. Beginning from left to right there is the category of “radical feminism” which you find in secular culture. They believe that women are superior in essence and that women are superior in function to men. Now to be fair, most of those in that category communicate that more in terms of an attitude, a disposition. They have a very exalted view of women and not such a high view of men. Gloria Steinem when talking about men and women said in terms of marriage, men and women have as much in common as a fish and a bicycle! Others argue the institution of marriage is nothing more than a legalized form of slavery of a woman to a man. A second group, is radical biblical feminism. They would argue that women are equal in essence to men and also women are the same in function as men as well. Anything a man can do a woman can, certainly in the church. The next category, egalitarianism, or what we could call evangelical feminism, has basically the same end result. Women are equal in essence and women have the same function in the church as do men. The difference is, evangelical egalitarians have a slightly higher view of the Bible than the prior category. In fact, some of them would say they are inerrantists, that they believe the Bible is without error in all that it teaches. Still they would argue men can be pastors and women can be pastors. Men can preach and women can preach. Anything a man does in a church, a woman can do as well.

In the next category you will recognize some names for example, my name is in there along with Al Mohler, Paige and Dorothy Patterson, Andres Kostenberger, Pete Schemm, and the faculties of our Southern Baptist Convention Seminaries. This particular position says women are equal in essence to men, that both men and women are equal image bearers to God, but women are different in their function and their assignment. Though there are equal to men, they are not called to the leadership assignment in the church. A woman should not fill the office

of the pastor, elder, or overseer. God has a parallel pattern between His government for His church and His government for the home. Indeed, there is a striking parallelism where in each God calls men to lead and He calls women to follow the leadership of the men.

Finally, there is the category of chauvinism. Aristotle was a thorough going chauvinist who believed in the ontological essential inferiority of women to men. And if you read Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, you are going to be hard pressed not to come away with the idea that they believe that men are superior in essence to women and that women are in some measure inferior to men. This is the broad playing field that is out there today. Now, the big question: for those of us who believe the Bible is the Word of God, for those of us who believe that the Bible is infallible and inerrant and that it indeed reveals God's will in all matters, what is God's pattern for women when it comes to the church and the body of Christ? Note three observations from the text. Following that, we are going to answer very quickly 10 practical questions.

I. God calls ladies to dress modestly. (9-10)

Note verse 9. "In like manner also, the women should adorn themselves in modest apparel with propriety and moderation and not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing." Paul says to women that there is a proper way to dress and there is an improper way to dress. We do know that historically in Ephesus, in Rome, and even in some of the other major cities, wealthy women were prone to show off their wealth. One of the ways they would do this is by what they would put on in terms of dress and clothing, things they would put around their neck, things they would put on their wrist, the rings they would put on their fingers, and in particular the various hairdos they would sometimes create. Often jewelry, diamonds and pearls would be

placed in their hair. In other words, the church in the ancient world sometimes tragically was a female fashion show. Now, it would be nice to say that does not happen anymore in the 21st century context, but lest you doubt that be the case, just think back for example to various Easter celebrations that you have seen throughout the years. It is almost imperative that a woman be in a new dress, a bright and colorful dress, a dress that would draw attention to something or to somebody. Now you say, “Danny, you think that is wrong?” It depends on what you mean. Do I think it is wrong to draw attention to yourself? Yes, of course I do. The only person that we ought to focus on when we come together is Jesus. If I am taking notice of a man or a woman by the way they dress, because they stand out and draw attention to themselves, I would say that is wrong and inappropriate and sinful. Of course, if we would be honest in this day, our problem now is not so often that people overdress. The problem now is we so often underdress and come to church like slobs. We come to church in a way that dishonors the one we are gathering to worship. Now, we must remember. Is there a different standard for believers and non-believers? Yes! I have completely different standards for believers and non-believers. You say, what are your standards for non-believers? I really don’t have any! I basically expect non-believers to act like non-believers and so I really don’t have much in way of a standard or an expectation for them at all. In contrast, for believers I have a much different standards because God has much different standards for them. When Paul was addressing this issue in verse 9 he was not talking to unbelievers, he was talking to believers. He is basically saying this, “You should not flaunt your wealth. You should not do anything that draws attention to yourself in terms of what you put in

your hair, what you put on your face, what you put around your neck, what you put on your body. No, you should adorn yourself in modest apparel with propriety, good judgment.” The next word “moderation” could be translated with discretion, self-control; not with braided hair or gold, or the pearls, or costly clothing. No, you want to dress in a Christ honoring way, a gracious way, a way that bespeaks a woman who is living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and wishes to draw attention only to Jesus and to nothing else. I came across an article in *Newsweek Magazine* entitled “Leave Your Hat on but Lose the Jeans.” It was a story about a lady who said, and I quote, “Returning to church recently for the first time since high school (so this is a lady who had dropped out of church like many people after high school and had not gone for a number of years and had now decided for whatever reason she ought to go back) I felt like I had emerged from a time machine in my tailored skirt, silk blouse and polished pumps. The rest of the congregation sported chunky pull over sweaters and faded blue jeans. In restaurants patrons pursue wine list and smooth cloth napkins in their laps while wearing sneakers. It is hard to justify our disheveled appearances with these kind of actions.” Basically, I think she is right. Now again, I am not in a tie tonight. I don’t require a coat and tie. I have got jeans, I’ve got t-shirts, I’ve got tennis shoes. There may be a particular time and place where those are appropriate, but I also suspect there is probably a time when we ought to be doing better, not to show off, but to honor Christ. That is the bottom line. The bottom line is as I eat, as I drink, or whatever I do, am I doing this to the glory of God? Well, in this context people were overdoing it. Maybe in many of our context people are under doing it. But then he says look, the gracious way is rooted in a godly way. But, “do that which

is proper for women who profess godliness with good works.” In other words, I am going to dress myself in a way that bespeaks the good works that are appropriate for someone that is a devoted and radical follower of Jesus Christ. Now, context can be everything. What is appropriate on one day when we gather may not necessarily be required on another day. That is one thing to consider. If you live in the deep south versus the northeast versus the Midwest versus the northwest versus southern California, it will be a different context. Translate yourself to the mission field and you are now in Africa or in Southeast Asia or you find yourself in the Ukraine or in South America. Again, the context where you locate and find yourself is going to influence what is deemed to be right. Modest, appropriate, Christ honoring. That is the guideline to follow.

II. Ladies learn submissively.

(11-14)

Paul gives us a three-fold argument in verses 11-14. First, this is the pattern of authority that God has instituted. Verse 11: “let a woman learn in silence with all submission.” Again I believe the best translation is let a woman learn quietly with a submissive heart. “I do not permit a woman to,” and note the conjunction that join the two ideas together, she is not to teach or have authority over a man but she is to be quiet. Question: can a woman ever teach? The text says they are not to teach and have authority. If I could paraphrase the meaning, a woman is not to be a pastor. A woman is not to be an elder. A woman is not to occupy an authoritative teaching position over men. That is what the text is saying. God has established a pattern of authority for the church and that authority lies with a man and not with a woman. Secondly, he grounds his argument, not in cultural preferences; he grounds his

argument in the priority of creation. Note verse 13: “For Adam was formed first and then Eve.” Paul gives us a *Reader’s Digest* version of Genesis 1 - 2. He says to go back and look at how creation unfolded. God made man first. Then what does the Bible say? “I will make for Adam a helper who will perfectly complement him.” Paul is saying even in creation itself we have a divine pattern of the priority of the man, one that translates both into the home and also the church. The order of creation is also a basis for arguing for male headship in the home and in the church. In other words, it is creationism not chauvinism that is the issue. But there is a third argument.

Learn from the particulars from the fall. This is a very hard verse to understand.

“Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into the transgression.”

This verse has been opened to all sorts of interpretations. One that held sway for a long time was that the women are forbidden for leadership in the church because women are more easily deceived than are men, that women are more gullible than are men. I agree with John Piper who actually confirmed my own thoughts. I think there are some areas where men are more gullible, and I think there are areas where women are more gullible. I think there are some areas in life where men are more easily deceived, and I think there are other areas in life where women are more easily deceived. Actually, I think what Paul is doing is not criticizing Eve, but criticizing Adam. His argument is Eve was deceived, but Adam was not deceived. In other words, Eve was beguiled and fooled by the serpent. But Adam sinned with full knowledge. Adam sinned knowing exactly what he was doing. The verse is not actually a slap in the face to Eve. It is actually a slap in the face to Adam. Read

Romans 5. In whom did the whole human race fall into sin? Did we fall into sin because Eve was the first transgressor? Or, did we fall into sin in Adam because he is the head of the race? The text is clear, and Adam is held responsible based upon Genesis 3, and Adam is held responsible based on Romans 5. Adam sinned willfully. Adam sinned knowingly, and yes, in the process, God's chain of command from God to man to woman to creation got reversed. The creature worked on Eve who worked on Adam, who together committed idolatry thinking in the day that they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they would be like God. Therefore, the blame ultimately falls on Adam, not Eve. He is not blaming Eve; he is actually holding Adam more culpable. God placed men in a leadership assignment in the context of marriage and the church and that was set up even before the fall took place in Genesis 3. So, we accept the pattern of authority. We notice the priority of creation. We learn from the particulars of the fall.

III. Ladies serve expectantly. (15)

Focus on your calling. Focus on your character. What does he say, “nevertheless, she, [that is women,] the woman, will be saved;” again the word can be translated “preserved.” She will be preserved in childbearing if indeed they continue in 1) faith, confidence and trust in God, 2) love, 3) holiness, 4) self control. What does he mean when he says a woman will be saved in child bearing? There are at least five different views. Some have said that saved in childbearing means she will be saved physically through childbearing but he can't mean that, because we all know of women who have died in the bearing of a child. So it cannot be that she is saved physically. Others have said that it means that women will be saved through the

incarnation of the one who will come from a woman. They make a connection between 1 Timothy 2:15 and Genesis 3:15 where it says “I will put enmity, between your seed and the seed of the woman. You will bruise his heel but you will crush his head.” Saved in childbearing means it will be through childbearing that the Savior will come. That’s not my view, but I do think there are some things to commend concerning that view. A third view is that she will be saved spiritually, but it can’t be that because we are saved through grace by faith, not by having children. Others have said it means to be saved from spiritual error and false teaching if you commit yourself to your calling of bearing children and rearing godly children and not getting caught up with the false teaching. I think “preserve” is the better view. She will be preserved is a better understanding. If a woman will accept the calling of being a mother and accept the calling of living in submission under the leadership structure that God has established then she will be preserved through the rearing of children, continuing in faith, love, holiness, self control. In other words, what he has in view here is a woman’s “sanctification” as she grows in Christ’s likeness and lives out her salvation. If she accepts the high calling of motherhood and accompanies it with these Christian graces that are a natural outgrowth of a relationship with Jesus Christ, she will be preserved. I think that is a better way of getting at what verse 15 is all about.

Now, you will note ten questions that I believe need to have an answer concerning the role of women in the church. Some of these I am just going to give a one or two word explanation. Another question or two may be a little bit long, but nothing will

be extensive. I will tell you where I believe the Bible speaks with dogmatic certainty, and then I will tell you what is my opinion.

- 1) Should a woman serve as a pastor or elder? The Bible's clear teaching on that is no. A woman should not be a pastor or an elder.
- 2) Should a woman serve as a deaconess? Here is my opinion. Yes, as long as the deacon and deaconess are biblical. They are servants, and they have no authority in the church. God says that the deacon is to be a servant to the body. Go read Titus 2:1-10. I think you have deacons, older men, instructing younger men; and deaconesses if you like, older godly women instructing younger women. I think you have it whether you call them that or not. Of course the word deacon/deaconess just means "servant." It is debated as to what is going on in 1 Timothy 3:8, but define a deacon and a deaconess biblically. See them as servants to the body, men primarily ministering to men, women primarily ministering to women, and don't ordain them to an authoritative position in the church.
- 3) Should a woman be ordained? If so, what are the limitations? There really is a prior question. Should anyone be ordained? I am actually in the same category here with Charles Spurgeon and Paige Patterson who believe we created something that is unbiblical. I believe that most of us in our practice of ordination are doing something, that is not unbiblical, it is simply that the Bible does not speak of anything like this at all. I am ordained. I was ordained because in certain states it is required for me to perform marriages and other functions of the clergy. But should a woman be ordained? Should anyone be ordained? If you are talking about should a woman be ordained to the office of a pastor or the elder,

the clear answer is no. What about if you were ordaining her to be a children's minister or a preschool minister, or some other kind of service? That is a different question that goes beyond the biblical text and we can address it some other time.

- 4) Can a woman speak in the assembly of believers? The answer is yes. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 says with a submissive spirit, attitude and deportment, women can both pray and prophesy with the body of believers is brought together for corporate worship. Does that then mean she can stand up here and be the primary teacher of the Word? No, that is reserved to a man, to the office of elder and pastor. Are there any limitations of women speaking in the church? Yes, we examined the main one in 1 Timothy 2:9-15. A woman cannot assume the authoritative teaching position over a man. I once attended a church, a very well known church that had as its largest Sunday school class, running more than 700, a mixed class taught by a woman. So week after week, year after year, decade after decade, a woman was occupying a consistent teaching position over men. Do I believe that can be supported biblically? No, I do not. Is it the case that there are times when a woman will instruct a man personally, privately, or in exceptional kind of situations that is not the normal pattern? Yes, I think that may be allowed. But to be in a consistent teaching pattern over a man violates the biblical teaching and biblical pattern. I would not be happy having mixed classes with the woman as the authoritative teacher.
- 5) Can a woman instruct a man? Yes, but it should be privately like Priscilla and Aquila in terms of their instruction of Apollos. It would be exceptional; it would be occasional, not continual. So, for example, one of my heros from the past is a

missionary by the name of Bertha Smith. Bertha Smith was a very brave missionary to China. On a number of occasions when she was in the states she was invited to come to a church like ours on a Sunday morning and she would come speak during the worship hour. She would always say, "I am here this morning under the authority of your pastor and at his invitation. I will speak as long as he gives me permission. If he asks me to stop, sit down and be quiet, I will stop, sit down and be quiet." I am comfortable with that because she is not there week after week as the authoritative teaching pastor of that local church.

- 6) Is Scripture culturally conditioned on this issue or is Paul's argument grounded in that which is trans-cultural and timeless? The answer is that it is trans-cultural and timeless. Paul makes his argument based upon the order of creation and not on the basis of the fall. Some people believe that women have to submit in marriage and in the church because of the fall. No, the fall messed everything up. The fall is the battle of the sexes begun and commenced. Paul makes his argument in Genesis 2 in terms of male headship. He does note the fall, but when he notes the fall he throws the blame at the feet of Adam not of Eve. So, I believe it is trans-cultural and it is timeless.
- 7) Are scriptural guidelines oppressive to women or liberating? Well, that is easy. Anything that God does for us is liberating from sin. Ladies should soar for the glory of God knowing that any parameters God establishes, he establishes them for your good and for His glory. It is like asking the question, did God establish parameters for our sexual activity? Is that a good thing or a bad thing? Well, we know this. If we would do sex God's way, one man one woman within the

confines of marriage for life, every STD disappears from the planet in one generation. That sounds like a good thing to me. That sounds like a wonderful thing to me. Whenever God establishes parameters He does so for His glory and for our good.

- 8) Will God's Spirit ever direct and speak contrary to His Word? Of course not. Are women essentially equal to men? Yes, of course they are. Men and women equally bear the image of God. But are there functional distinctions? Yes, there are some major functional distinctions and differences that very clearly reveal themselves.
- 9) Does God's role for women in the church parallel God's role for women in the home? Yes. Could I be a member of a church that has a female pastor? No, I could not. Could I be supportive of a home where the woman is the leader? No, I would tell such a person that I think that they have things confused and they need to rethink what they are doing. Now, could I vote for a female to be president of the United States? Yes, I could. I have voted for a female senator. Some have tried to argue that there is a parallelism all the way across the board for the home, for the church, and for the government. I don't see that. The Bible does say it! I am going to draw the line where God clearly draws the lines. The bottom line is this: ladies you can teach children, you can teach women, you can pour your life into children and you can pour your life into women. Some ladies will touch the world through their sons who sense God's calling upon their lives and find themselves scattered around the world preaching the gospel because of the

influence and the impact made upon their lives, hopefully by a godly daddy, but also by a godly, godly mother. I see no loss in that!