

The Role Of Men And Women In The church

Titus 2:1-8

We live in a culture that is drowning in gender confusion. The lines have become blurred and we are groping about trying to understand what it means for a man to be a man and a woman a woman, what it means for a man to be masculine and a woman feminine. A recent presidential candidate referred to himself as “metrosexual,” a word that refers to a heterosexual male who is in touch with his feminine side. The candidate went on to say, “I’ve heard the term, but I don’t know what it means” (*Newsweek*, Nov. 19, 2003, p. 23). It is transparently clear that the cultural engineers that dominate the media, our educational system (from the preschools to the universities) and other strategic places of influence want to neutralize, if not eliminate, the gender distinctions and differences that God has hardwired into human beings (Gen. 1:26-27). This is the consistent drumbeat heard again and again and unfortunately, the church has not been immune to the sound.

Practicing homosexuals are now ordained as bishops. Divorced ministers continue in places of service as if nothing significant occurred when their marriage covenant was broken. Women (married, divorced, single, heterosexual and lesbian) now flock to seminaries and fill pulpits across the land declaring their liberation from the oppressive writings of the Bible. Even within evangelical fellowships women aspire to teaching positions that place them over men in Sunday Schools, Bible studies and local church worship services. The secular culture is shaping the Church more than sacred Scripture. Never has the church needed more desperately to hear the words of Titus 2:1-8, a text that makes plain and clear God’s plan, God’s assignment, God’s role for men and women in the Church. In this passage of Scripture Paul outlines God’s expectations for each of the 4 major groups in the Church in terms of gender and age. Though the word itself does not appear, the driving concept in these verses can be summed up in one important word: “mentoring.” Older men need to mentor younger men and older women need to mentor younger women. In that context, and for teaching purposes, verses 1-8 can be viewed as something of a semantic chiasm, an ABB´A´ structure (Older men-older women-younger women-younger men).

I. Pursue God’s Assignment As An Older Man. 2:1-2

Paul begins this section of Scripture by drawing a contrast between Titus in particular, and older men in general, and the false teachers who were harassing the church at Crete (1:10-15). These troublemakers were insubordinate, mouthy and deceptive. They were motivated by money, liars and lazy. They listened to the words of men, of popular culture, more than to the Word of God. They were infected with a defiled mind and a defiled conscience, professing to know God but by their actions denying Him. They were detestable, disobedient and “unfit for doing anything good” (*NIV*). Paul challenges Titus (v.1) and the older, mature men (v.2) to pursue a different path, a path that would please God and provide a pattern for others to follow. He quickly defines 7 essential characteristics.

1). Be A Teacher. 2:1

Godly men are called by God to teach, recognizing that their teaching can take different and varied forms. “But you” is emphatic in the original language. “Speak” is a present imperative (cf. 2:15). Here it means to teach or instruct. We are to teach things that are proper, in accord, fitting with sound doctrine (lit. “healthy teaching”). We must be true to the gospel of Jesus Christ and true to the Word of God both in belief and behavior. What follows in verse 2 provides the foundation that will insure that we do not fail in this crucial task.

2). Be Sober. 2:2

The more mature men (Gr. *presbutas*) in the church are admonished to be “temperate” (*NIV*), clear-headed (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2, 11). This man is wise in his decision-making and careful when making judgments. He is clear on what really matters and decisive in making godly choices. He uses smartly his God-given talents and gifts, his time, his money and his energy. He is a man with right and godly priorities and he has as his motto for life one simple dictum: “all that matters in life is that you please God.”

3). Be Reverent. 2:2

This idea describes a person of dignity and “respect” (*NIV*). This man goes after that which is noble and morally valuable and worthy. It is a character trait that God expects of the deacon (1 Tim. 3:8) and his wife (1 Tim. 3:11). This is the man who, while not being a prune or a Pharisee, take no delight in inappropriate off colored humor, vulgarity, or anything else that is suspect, questionable or clearly out of bound. He himself is worthy of honor and respect, particularly by younger men, because of the purity and integrity of his life.

4). Be Self-Controlled. 2:2

This word is translated as “temperate” in the *New King James Version*. It is probably the key idea in this section of Titus. Some form of the word appears to each of the 4 key groups of the church that Paul addresses: verse 2 to the older men; verse 4 as the verb “teach” (*NIV*) to the older women; verse 5 as the word “sensible” (*NIV*) to the younger woman, and verse 6 as the word “self-controlled” or “sober-minded” (*NKJV*) to the younger men. This person has his passions under control and is self-disciplined. He is not careless or foolish with his words or in his behavior. John MacArthur summarizes well this quality of life, saying that this man “should have the discernment, discretion, and judgment that comes from walking with God for many years. They control their physical passions and they reject worldly standards and resist worldly attractions” (p. 74). They refuse to be conformed to this world but are transformed daily by a renewed mind bathed in Scripture (Rom. 12:2).

5). Be Sound In The Faith. 2:2

Paul, in the last 3 terms in this verse, brings to our consideration the Christian triad of faith, love and patience (the natural outgrowth of hope). Mature godly men are to be sound (Gr. *hygianontas*), healthy in their confidence and trust in the Lord. This kind of personal faith is rooted in a daily walk with God as Father and an immersion of one’s life in the Scriptures. This man not only know what he believe and why he believes it, he

knows who he believes. This is the man who says of His God, “even when I cannot trace His hand, I can always trust His heart.”

6). Be Loving. 2:2

Jesus said in John 13:35 to His disciples on the night he was betrayed, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Love is mentioned in a general sense here in Titus. We are to love God supremely, fellow-believers genuinely and lost humanity fervently. The kind of love, beautifully portrayed in 1 Cor. 13:4-8, is to be the standard we strive to obtain day in and day out.

7). Be Patient. 2:2

The Christian of all people, because of the hope that is within him, should be patient, steadfast, he should exhibit “endurance” (*NIV*). Because we know how it will all come out in the end, we can endure testing, work through hardship, accept disappointment, and not give up under pressure and adversity. The mature godly man does not lose heart, throw in the towel or drop out of the race. Rather, he runs the race with endurance, fixing his eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith (Heb. 12:1-2).

My granddaddy Gallaway was a Titus 2:1-2 kind of man. A Georgia dirt farmer raised by a harsh stepmother, he had only a 5th grade education. And, he was without question one of the godliest men I’ve ever known. Not well-educated, afflicted with severe arthritis in his legs, and done wrong on more than one occasion because of his trusting nature, he never lost faith in his Lord and he never questions the plans and workings of God in his life. He lived simply on a day-by-day basis trusting in the Lord. He set an example any mother or father could have pointed to and said to their son, “I hope you grow up someday to be like Charley Gallaway in the way you love and serve the Lord.” This is God’s assignment for the older men.

II. Pursue God’s Assignment As An Older Woman. 2:3

Several years ago Elisabeth Elliott wrote an article entitled, “Where Are The WOTTs?” (*Pulpit Helps*, May 1997, p. 10). She was moved to write the article after speaking to a group of pastor’s wives and discovering that 80% of them were working outside of the home. The question Elisabeth asked is simple and to the point, “Where are the godly older women who are to teach young mothers how to manage their children and homes? Where are the WOTTs, the Women of Titus Two?” Well, those women are described here in verse 3, and Paul provides them with a 4 –fold job description in terms of their own character that gives them the basis for their assignment of “mentoring” younger women as described in verses 4-5.

1). Be Reverent.

The word “likewise” means in the same way. These (Gr. *presbutidas*, only here in the New Testament) women have a task that is parallel to that of the older men. The first character trait that they should pursue is “reverence,” a word that literally means “temple fitting” or appropriate for behavior in a temple. The basic meaning is that this woman should live in such a way as is benefiting a godly person. Hers is a life of holiness, reflecting the very character of the Lord she loves and lives for.

2). Be Truthful.

Godly women speak the truth, they do not “slander” (Gr. *diabolous*), make false and unfounded accusations. This Greek word is the word from which we get our English word “devil” and is used to refer to our archenemy 34 times in the New Testament. A mature woman in Christ is not devilish in her speech, picking up gossip and spreading it abroad. This woman has a control, a governor, on her tongue. She knows that “sticks and stones may break my bones, but names (or words) will never hurt me” is not true. When she speaks, she speaks the truth, and she speaks it in love (Eph. 4:15).

3). Be Sober.

This daughter of God is not to be given to much wine, much alcohol. The original is quite strong, admonishing her not to have become enslaved (perfect tense verb) to too much wine so that it owns and dominates and controls her. Mounce points out that, “Alcoholism must have been a severe problem since it is an issue in the appointment of church leaders in every list (1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Tim. 5:23). While this is true in almost every culture (cf. 1 Cor. 11:21)...it was especially true in Crete [where they viewed] heavy drinking as a virtue” (Mounce, 410). It is of course certain and nondebatable that if one never takes the first drink they will never have to worry about drunkenness or alcoholism, and all the misery that follows in the footsteps of drink. A godly person controls both their tongue and their appetites.

4). Be A Teacher.

Like their godly counterpart, the older men, these mature disciples of Christ, are to be adept at teaching. Indeed they are to be teachers of good things (*kalodidaskalos*). This is a unique word in all of Greek literature and may have been coined by Paul himself. The focus, in light of what follows in verses 4-5, is the informal, one-on-one or small group instruction that these mature women pass on to their younger spiritual sisters. Issues of marriage, family, and child rearing are set alongside basic matters of spiritual life in Christ. This mentoring of the young by the more mature is a biblical pattern we have neglected to our great hurt and harm. These younger women desperately need the role modeling, teaching, insight and practical wisdom that these older ladies can provide. Being more experienced in life and the Lord, they can pass on a godly legacy that will hopefully reproduce itself for generations. A godly home will orbit around a godly wife and mother. This “blessed disease” is as much caught as taught.

III. Pursue God’s Assignment As A Younger Woman.

2:4-5

Cultural pressure and expectations have robbed many women of the blessings and joys of homemaking and motherhood. The Feminist Movement made promises on which it could not deliver. The fallout has been mammoth and disastrous, and we are still in the midst of the whirlwind. It is obvious from this text that a feminist agenda and the resulting confusion and rejection of God-ordained roles is not restricted to the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The 1st century suffered from this malady as well, and so Paul confronts it head on. He has laid down God’s assignment for the older woman as it relates to the younger: be “teachers of good things.” What “good teaching” did Paul have in mind? He answers that question in verses 4-5.

1). Love Your Husbands. 2:4

Older women are to “admonish” or “train” (*NIV*), to encourage or advise the younger women “to love their husbands.” Interestingly, this is the only time in the Bible where a woman is encouraged to love her husband, the man in her life. Husbands of course receive multiple and detailed instruction in this regard (Eph. 5:25-33; Col. 3:19). Paul is concerned that a woman’s first commitment under the lordship of Jesus Christ is to her husband and her marriage. The way a couple loves each other will model for the children the way they should love their future spouses. The fact is we do not so much “fall in love” as we “learn to love.”

2). Love Your Children. 2:4

Few things are more natural for a mother than loving her children. However, a young mother must move beyond her natural innate affection to a specific lifestyle and plan of action that will cultivate in her children godly character and affection. Proverbs 29:15 says, “The rod and the rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to *himself* brings shame to his mother.” The most important way a mother can love her children is to love them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. As she loves them physically, emotionally, educationally, morally, socially and spiritually, she always has her eye on their need for Christ. By why she does and says, she gently and with sensitivity puts before them the love of God and the work of Christ. She speaks to her child with grace and wisdom sharing with him or her the grace, mercy and claims of Jesus Christ. Her greatest joy and most awesome heritage is godly children devoted to Jesus and His plan and purpose for their lives.

3). Be Self-Controlled. 2:5

Young women should be “discreet,” sensible, “self-controlled” (*NIV*). Paul again challenges a particular group in the church to exercise common sense and good judgment. The best way to learn this is to see it up close and personal in the life of another. Young women will best learn to exercise balance and wisdom in their lives as they observe it in the lives of older, more mature women.

4). Be Pure. 2:5

God calls a young woman to be chaste, “pure” (*NIV*). Her moral life is above reproach, and she is by life and reputation a one-man kind of woman. She is faithful to her marriage vows and sexually gives herself to only one man, her husband. The man in her life trusts her and is confident in her. The God she serves sees His own character reflected in her life as it radiates forth from a heart surrendered to Jesus.

5). Be A Homemaker. 2:5

This lady is “busy at home” (*NIV*), a home worker. Her home is her primary base of operation and the main focus of her attention. Proverbs 31:10-31 teaches us that a diligent homemaker may be involved in a wide range of activities and interests. She is not lazy or a busybody, nor is she distracted by outside pursuits and responsibilities that eat up her precious time and attention. This woman is not seduced by the sirens of modernity who tell her she is wasting her time and talent as a homemaker, and that it is the career woman who has purpose and is truly satisfied. The recent turn in women

leaving the workplace and returning home has become too noticeable to be ignored. It is a reflection of what God planted in the heart of a wife and mother when He made her a female in His image. The blessings and joy she will discover as a wife, mother and homemaker can never be matched by a career that in the end cannot make good on its promises. Being a homemaker is not an institutionalized form of bondage and slavery. It is the greatest context for a woman to experience liberation and liberty as she is set free by the plan of God to be the woman God created and saved her to be. My father in the ministry Paige Patterson says the second greatest calling in life is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The first he says is to be a homemaker who raises up a generation of godly children to the glory of God. I find it difficult to disagree with Dr. Patterson on this.

6). Be Good. 2:5

A young woman should be good, “kind” (*NIV*). Simply said, they are to be Jesus-like. They are to be gentle and considerate, gracious and merciful, even to those who may not treat them the same way.

7). Be Subject To Your Husband. 2:5

In keeping with what is said consistently throughout the New Testament (Eph. 5:21-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-5), wives are encouraged to “be subject to their own husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God” (*NIV*). Submission means to yield in one’s will to the leadership and direction of another. It is more of an attitude than an action, though one’s attitude will certainly determine one’s actions. Contrary to popular misconceptions, there is no inferiority in submissiveness. We see this plainly in the Trinity where Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all equally God, and yet for the purpose of redemption the Son submits in His assignment to the Father. Note also that a wife submits to her “own husband,” not every man. This charge is quite specific. Indeed, unless a husband asks his wife to do something that is unbiblical, illegal, immoral, or unethical, she is to follow his leadership. By doing this she will honor God and His Word, and reach, in a more effective manner, the heart of her husband.

IV. Pursue God’s Assignment As A Younger Man. 2:6-8

Paul now addresses the 4th group, younger men. The implication is that they will be instructed in the way they should live by the older men who will provide the encouragement and example they need. Younger men need strong healthy role models provided by older men. In an article in the *South China Post* it was pointed out, “What a real man needs is another man to talk to and reinforce his maleness and help him be a better husband...without such a friend, men risk reverting to a mother-child relationship with a spouse.” Dr. Peter Karl writes, “Men become helpless and insecure and increasingly revert to the classic overgrown kid who expects to be mothered...men have few positive role models” (*South China Post*, April 23, 2000). Paul recognizes the need younger men have for godly mentoring, and so he instructs them in a pattern of discipleship that will promote godly character, conviction and commitment.

1). Be Sober. 2:6

“Likewise” again means in the same way (as in verse 3). “Exhort” is a present imperative giving it the force of a command that is to continually be set before the

younger men. Like the others, they are encouraged to be “sober,” “self-controlled” (NIV), in control of their lives, thoughts and passions. Proverbs 23:7 reminds us that “as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.” The self-controlled man actively engages the battle for the mind, knowing that he must control and discipline his thought life if he is to win the battles of the Christian life.

2). Be A Good Example. 2:7

Addressing Titus once again as he also speaks to the younger men, Paul tells him to be a “pattern” (Gr. *typos*), an example “of good things.” *Tupos* is a word that gives us our English word “type.” Titus is to be a type or mold “into which others can be impressed and therefore bear a likeness to him.” (Mounce, 413). The great preacher from Antioch, John Chrysostom said, “Let the luster of your life be a common school of instruction, a pattern of virtue to all.” Young men should be on the lookout for godly men they can emulate, men they can pattern their life after.

3). Be Sound In Doctrine. 2:7

Young men must not be fooled into following false doctrine. They must show integrity and reverence (NIV, “seriousness”). The focus falls here more on “how” one teaches than “what” one teaches. Both are essential of course, but purity in motive and authenticity in manner is what Paul is after. A life of moral integrity must accompany the teaching ministry. Content and character, *logos* and *ethos* go together and must complement one another if the truth is to be taught without compromise and corruption.

4). Be Sound In Speech. 2:8

Integrity in doctrine comes from a pure vessel that pours forth sound or healthy (Gr. *hygie*) speech. The pure word from a pure vessel is not subject to legitimate condemnation or criticism. In fact those who criticize such faithful and holy teachers will eventually shame themselves, because their accusation are without merit or substance. Kent Hughes says, “there should be a multiplication of silencers as the godly influence of Titus spreads among the young men and helps to heal the embattled church” (Hughes, 332). The gospel in our own day has been subjected to a great deal of ridicule. Far too often the cause of offense has not been the message, but the messenger. If persons refuse to come to Christ let it be the message that they say no to, not the messenger who because of a shameful life clouds the purity of the Word of salvation.

Conclusion. When we carefully consider the whole of biblical revelation and its implications for the role of men and women in the church and the work of the Lord, several important conclusions need to be affirmed and applauded.

- 1). Both man and woman are created in God’s image, equal before Him as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
- 2). Differences in masculine and feminine roles both in the home and the Church are ordained by God as part of His plan for His Creation. This is intended for God’s glory and our good.
- 3). The Fall in Genesis 3 introduced distortions into the relationship between men and women with tragic consequences. As it relates to the church, sin leads men toward a worldly love of power on the one hand, or the abdication of spiritual responsibility on the

other. With respect to women, sin inclines them to either resist the parameters established by God for their assignments, or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate and God-honoring ministries.

4). Redemption through the perfect atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse and the Fall.

5). In the Lord's church, redemption in Christ gives men and women equal rights and an equal share in the blessings of salvation. These rights and blessings are in perfect accord with the leadership and teaching assignments within the church given only to men. The role of the pastor-teacher is an office restricted to men.

6). The God-given desire to serve the Lord that resonate both in men and women should never be used to set aside the clear biblical pattern for ministry established by God in His Word.

7). With billions of persons living without the knowledge of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ; with countless other lost people in those cultures that have heard the gospel; with the heartbreak and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, aging, drug and alcohol addictions, crime, incarceration, depression and loneliness, no man or woman, boy or girl, who has a God-given passion to make God's amazing grace known in word and deed need ever live without a vital and fulfilling ministry for the glory of God and the good of others in this fallen world. Every child of God is called to proclaim the gospel to the lost. Every child of God is called to minister the Word. Every child of God is called to help the hurting. Every child of God at some time needs a mentor and is called to be a mentor. For the honor of Jesus and the sake of human souls, let us all be about the business of doing what God created us and saved us to be, doing His work, His way, and always for the praise of His Name.¹

¹ Concluding remarks summarized from portions of *The Danvers Statement* from the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW).