

# Roles and Gender

A Detailed Study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and beyond

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## **I. Introduction**

I wish at the very outset, to set out my basic position. I understand there to be but three positions on the issue before us. On the one side is the position called “egalitarianism”. This position would say there can be no equality between men and women unless we strip away all gender based roles. In other words, there is no role assignment given specifically to gender. Hence, under this position, it would not matter whether a man or a woman would serve as an elder or a lead pastor. This position is very much the same position as feminism – whether it is called evangelical feminism or the plain garden variety feminism that is now dogma in every single secular institution in our society. I believe this position to be inconsistent with scripture – for the Bible does not treat men and women without reference to gender based roles.

On the other side is the position of gender hierarchy. In this position, women should not be permitted to teach or lead or in any way be involved in public ministry. This position is roughly equivalent to a view that puts women in an inferior place to men. I also believe this position is out of keeping with the scripture.

I take neither of those views. My view is what has been called the complementarian view. It is the view which is the moderate view between these two extremes. In this view, men and women are completely equal, but by virtue of gender have been given complimentary roles. At the end of this paper, I will attempt to spell this out.

I came out of Fuller Seminary convinced of the egalitarian view. Fuller allows its professors to deny the inerrancy of Scripture, but will not allow a complementarian to teach on staff. For many, as it is with Fuller today, this is the new orthodoxy. I did not seriously study the issue while at Fuller, but I accepted the logic behind the position. I simply assumed that the roles of elders, pastors and teachers were open to all, regardless of gender. I started my ministry with this assumption. I have changed my view, because of a challenge from an elder, to study 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

## ***I. Introduction***

### ***A. This Study will be based upon 2 assumptions***

#### ***1. The cultural background of any text is not an accident, but is sovereignly ordained by God.***

I begin with a basic assumption, important to understand my argument. I assume that God sovereignly ordained the culture out of which scripture came. Why is this important? Krister Stendahl, then the dean of Harvard Divinity School said, and I quote: “*The masculinity of God and of God language, is a cultural and linguistic accident, and I think one should also argue that the masculinity of the Christ is of the same order.*” I disagree. My assumption is that Galatians 4:2-4, which tells us that the incarnation happened at the right time and according to God’s sovereign purposes, is not only true about the birth of Christ, but is true of the birth of the entire scripture. The historical

background of each Bible text is no accident, but is indeed the sovereign design of God, who placed each cultural piece in exactly the order he sovereignly devised in order to make his revelation unmistakably plain. In other words, God is not a King because there happened to be kings around in Bible times. Rather, God sovereignty arranged history and culture so there would be kings, and so that he could declare himself as the King of all Kings. Only because there were Kings, can we understand God's rulership. The same is true for the Fatherhood of God. The same is also true for the background of 1 Timothy. The cultural background is not an accident – it is there by the design of God – so that we can learn proper male and female relationships.

As we will see, evangelical feminists base much of their argument on the idea of cultural backgrounds to which a given passage speaks. They will argue that the culture of a passage renders it “time sensitive”. While all believers acknowledge that the understanding the culture of a passage is vital, it is a matter of intense debate that the culture of a text renders it applicable to then alone. Those of us on the conservative end of things want to argue that all Bible texts, without exception, escape their time, and are relevant to all believers at all times.

## ***2. 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is not a unique passage of scripture, but is standard Christian teaching from Genesis to Revelation***

1 Timothy 2:11-15 is not a unique passage, describing something that happened in only in Ephesus or the early church. It is rather, standard Christian teaching for all times. It is entirely in line with what Scripture teaches from Genesis to Revelation. That was the position of the early church and that has been the position of the church for 1900 years – until the advent of the woman's suffrage movement and contemporary feminism. Almost all scholars agree, that the idea of different roles for men and women was a universal understanding of the church until the recent past.

Even though there have indeed been differences of opinion as to what roles and gender ought to look like, and even though the church has failed to understand the true dynamic of this text at times, it is not until the advent of contemporary feminism, precipitated by the industrial revolution, the invention of the pill and the accessibility of abortion upon demand that has made it possible to even have such a debate. If we had time, I would show that the idea of egalitarianism, which is the principle plank of feminism has given rise to abortion on demand and homosexual ideology. We could also see that feminism has contributed to the decline in birth rate in the industrialized world, and also to therefore to its eventual demise. Further, we would see that feminist assumptions have introduced a new hermeneutic which will open fresh problems for those who adopt it. Finally, we would also find that egalitarianism as a philosophy is simply absent to the entire Bible. The Bible assigns specific roles to gender – and it does so explicitly in both Testaments.

## **II. Background of 1 Timothy 2:11-16 – Genesis 1-3 – The Creation account**

Before dealing with the specifics of the Pauline teaching of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, it is necessary for us to begin where Paul does. Paul begins with creation and the fall. And since he does – so shall we.

## **A. The Creation before the fall.**

1. We begin with Genesis 1:26-28. *And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Essential to this passage is the understanding that both male and female is in the image of God. Bruce Waltke rightly believes that because this truth has not been faithfully proclaimed in synagogues and churches, it has been left for feminists to proclaim it. It is simply a black mark on sacred history. At times, Christians have failed to proclaim the equality of both sexes, in spite of the fact that it is a basic Bible doctrine. From this text, we should see that the true destiny of humanity is shared equally by both men and women.

2. *And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)*

With each successive day of creation God pronounces his work to be good. The only exception is found in the end of day 2, and one suspects that until God had completed his work with water, he was not yet prepared to call it good. Never the less, he makes up for it, for twice on the 6<sup>th</sup> day God pronounces his work to be good. The first time is when he has completed all work of creation outside of the creation of the man and the woman. But after the creation of Adam and Eve; the wording changes. God pronounces this now to be very good. One can therefore say that man as male and female is very good. And in this we surely find a mystery. God could just as easily have found another way of propagating the species. But he chose to do so with male and female. As some have said, he made them Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. Paul Jewett, I believe rightly maintains that the image is found in both man and woman. He means that there is something unique about the image that is brought by both man and woman, and that without both genders, we would not see clearly to the image of God.

3. *Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him.” (Genesis 2:18)*

Already we begin to see a distinction between the man and the woman. The woman is the man’s helper. That is her unique role. I say it is unique since nowhere is the man ever called the woman’s helper. It is important to note that the role of helper is by no means a denigration or even a lesser role. Psalm 118:7 calls the LORD himself our helper. The same thing is repeated in Hebrews 13:6. The Holy Spirit is called the Paraclete, and the idea of helping is a part of that. So as an image bearer of God, this is a distinctive glory that is given only to the woman. She is – and she alone as woman – is the helper.

4. *So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. The man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:21-25)*

In this passage are recorded the only words that an unfallen human being has ever spoken. We might argue that Eve's words to the Serpent were also unfallen, but she is then in the throes of temptation. Here is no temptation, here is true and pure humanity as it was intended. And isn't it interesting that these words, the only words from pure humanity are the words of a song sung by a naked man to a naked woman! It is probably this reality that makes pornography such a vile thing, for it takes away the purity, dignity and blessedness of lifelong loving passion and turns it into a thing of shame. That being said, it is fascinating to see what the content of Adam's love for Eve is. Waltke says that it is love untouched by envy and a desire to dominate and control her. He simply celebrates with admiration her equality with him in elevated poetry. But as we have and will see, their equality does not make them the same. He is a man and she is a woman. He was created first and she was taken out of him. Her name, as we will see, is taken from him.

## B. The Creation After The Fall

1. ***Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?" (Genesis 3:1)***

The entire fall of humanity began with a hermeneutical debate. What has God actually said? Nothing is more important than this question. Simply saying that sincere Bible students disagree on the issue of women in leadership is meaningless and irrelevant. Of course Bible students disagree. There is in fact not one doctrinal issue upon which Bible students in history have not disagreed. Equally silly is the question of whether or not they are sincere. Sincerity requires the kind of judgment that we are to refrain from. Since we cannot judge motives, but only God can, we do well to leave that question out of our inquiry. The only question of any value – is to examine what God has actually said.

2. ***But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:4-5)***

Theologians have typically said that the heart of the fall consisted of two elements. They are unbelief and pride. Unbelief is the failure to believe that God meant what he said when he said it. Pride is the idea that our opinion rival's God's opinion. Hermeneutics stands at the centre of the debate.

3. ***So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to their eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." (Genesis 3:6)***

While the dialogue between the woman and the serpent is fascinating in itself, for our purposes I wish to focus on one aspect of the text. The entire dialogue between the woman and the Serpent happened in Adam's presence, while he watched. He does not speak, he merely observes. Indeed, if this text is about leadership at all, it is the woman who leads into sin and not the man. The idea of who leads, as we will see is hardly a neutral question. Paul will make much of this. As it was, she fell, and Adam fell with her, following her lead.

4. ***But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9)***

When God comes to accuse the man and the woman, we find, surprisingly, that he actually does not call the woman at all. He calls the man. It is clear that it was the woman who sinned first. But whom does God hold accountable? He holds the man accountable. And as we will see in 1 Timothy, this is a theme which is near to Paul's own thoughts. But it is a theme that is replayed in other portions of Pauline literature as well. *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin... (Romans 5:12a) For if many died through one man's trespass... (Romans 5:15) If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man... (Romans 5:17) For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."* (Romans 5:19)

The contrast in Paul is stunning. No where does he even mention Eve when he speaks of the culpability of sin. His entire focus is to contrast the one man, Adam, with the other man Christ. Paul places the blame for the sin in the garden solidly on the shoulders of the man, and makes no mention of the woman at all. He does the exact same thing again in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

One is reminded of Krister Stendall's comments that Jesus being a male is an historical accident. Paul states it from the perspective divine sovereignty, of two men, men who are given federal headship of the human race. The New Testament witness holds Adam completely accountable. Even though Eve sinned first, and she is the one deceived, Adam is accountable. Why? Past theologians have argued on this basis that this is why Jesus could have an earthly mother and not an earthly father, because the sin nature is passed through the man. Perhaps – although the Bible never says so. But it does say something central about men and women and leadership. Paul is merely arguing the way he always does. The man – in the garden – takes responsibility for that which he did not initially do. It is in this sense that Ephesians 5 tells men to love their wives as Christ loved the church, for Christ has taken responsibility on the cross for something he did not do. Men like Christ are to lay down their lives for their wives. That is the definition of Biblical Christ Centered Leadership. It is interesting to note however that Adam first response to sin was to blame the woman, not to take responsibility. He tells God it was the woman you have given me.

Of course Adam's answer is irrelevant. He was called upon to lead, and she was his helper. His feeble excuse only serves as a reminder of his willful rebellion of his God ordained role.

I am tempted here to make this into a sermon, for I am a preacher, but I will resist. You would probably guess where I would go with that. The entire chivalry movement was based upon this biblical assumption of male federal headship and responsibility to sacrifice one's life for the woman. It is interesting to note that when the Titanic sank, all men were told to stand fast, while the women and children were given the lifeboats. Contrast that to the situation of the Estonia, which sank over a decade ago off the waters of Norway. Over 95% of the survivors were men, who simply by virtue of their sheer strength out muscled the women to safety. This is the first fruit of egalitarian philosophy. Women have fared poorly under both hierarchy and under feminism. Men have as well, as is witnessed by fewer men even interested in the faith. I believe the Bible charts a different course.

***5. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise you head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:15)***

Paul makes much of this verse in 1 Timothy. Here, however, we merely note the victory of the woman’s seed. Even though there is a curse on the woman’s actual experience in bearing children, yet her offspring will himself break the curse which presently holds the man and the woman. Hence she has a noble task to play in the history of redemption. It is a task that only she can play, a task that she bears because of her gender.

***To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain shall your bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16)*** Feminist theologians have argued that this arrangement is a curse of the fall, now rectified in Christ. Hence female submission is what Christ came to redeem. The ramifications of this view vastly change the nature of both our churches and our families. But we must not get ahead of ourselves. We have not yet determined what the rulership of the man entails. Indeed, how can she as a fallen woman trust the rulership of a fallen man?

***6. The man called his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. (Genesis 3:20)***

This now is the second time Adam names Eve. In Genesis 2:23, he named her woman in his first anticipation of her love, and now names her again in his anticipation of her motherhood. And so we find that it was God who named Adam and it was Adam who named Eve. In Genesis 5:2, God will call the entire human race, “Adam”. Indeed, in the Hebrew language, the translated word for man is the word Adam. That is why the issue of gender neutrality in the translation of the Old Testament is not a simple matter. God calls the human race by the name of the first man and not by the name of the first woman or first couple. And from this naming comes the entire history of patriarchy. Two things should be noted. First of all, the principle of naming is in the Old Testament, the principle of leadership. For instance, when Nebuchadnezzar renamed Daniel and his three friends, he does so as an act of leadership and of expressing authority over them. In Numbers 32:38, Israel asserted their authority over the Promised Land, by renaming the rebuilt cities. In 2 Kings 23:34, Pharaoh Neco renames Eliakim, giving him the name Jehoiakim. All these are acts of leadership. So Adam naming his wife plays that very same role. Paul will play on that theme in 1 Timothy, when he forbids a woman to exercise authority over a man. He is simply restating the creation narrative. Secondly, and this is key, the New Testament definition of leadership is found in Christ, whose leadership led to his sacrificial death for his bride the church.

This then, in a quick fashion is the creation narrative in relationship of men and woman. We are now ready to study 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

## **II. 1 Timothy 2:11-15**

### **A. Reasons why we should treat this teaching as standard Christian teaching and not as something for Ephesus in the first century only.**

Feminist theologians have argued that 1 Timothy 2:11-15 speaks to matters which were unique to the Ephesian church. They suggest that those unique situations make it unwise for us to apply this passage to our situation today. Indeed, they will say that if there is any application at all, it is that we should silence false teachers. But because of

the unique situation at Ephesus, we should take nothing from 1 Timothy that should inform us on the role of men and women, and whether it is appropriate for a woman to teach men. For them, 1 Timothy presents us with “time sensitive” literature, that has long since reached its expiry date.

**I will give 8 reasons, which I think prove that 1 Timothy 2:11-15 should be considered to be normative teaching, that is, it is what Scripture considers standard teaching for all peoples at all times.**

**1. None of the false teachers in Ephesus were women.** Evangelical feminists argue that 1 Timothy is unique because Paul is giving this instruction to stop false teachers using women to further their teaching. Much has been done to point out that false teaching is at the heart of this book, and that false teachers had subverted the women. So, in the case of Ephesus, women were called to be quiet. And since this was unique to Ephesus, we should not take this as a standard teaching. This is misleading, for we are never told that women were the source of problem. In fact, quite the opposite is true. 1 Timothy 1:20 mentions Hymenaeus and Alexander. 2 Timothy 2:17-18 mentions Hymenaeus again, and then adds a man named Philetus. In fact, in Acts 20:30, Paul warns the Ephesian elders of men who will arise among them. He uses the male term “andres”, and does not mention women. Only men are mentioned as false teaches.

**2. There is no proof that any women were involved in furthering false doctrines.** Women are accused of gossip but not spreading false teaching. The Greek word used for gossip (phluaros) is never translated as spreading false teaching in any standard Greek lexicon. Of course, when we get to 1 Timothy 3, it becomes quite apparent that only men were teaching in the first place. Even 2 Timothy 3:6-7, in which Paul mentions false teachers who capture weak women, only indicates that they were being led astray, and never once mentions these women as responsible for teaching false doctrines. That is not to say that women have not taught false doctrine – it is only to say that Paul never accuses women of doing it in Ephesus.

**3. There were godly women in Ephesus.** One of them was the famous Priscilla. Paul sends her greetings in 2 Timothy 4:19. It therefore seems likely that she was already there during the writing of 1 Timothy. And even if she wasn't there, was she also now to be quiet the minute she arrived because of false teachers? But we need to remember that Paul also mentions other godly women 1 Timothy 5:5; 9-10. In fact, 1 Timothy 5 is a manual as to how to spot a godly and an ungodly woman. So then, in Ephesus there were some godly women and some ungodly women, just as there were some godly men and some ungodly men. What God forsaken reason would inspire the apostle Paul then to command all the women – both godly and ungodly to be quiet and not do the same for the men? As Bruce Waltke has said, this is like burning down the house, the barn, the silo and the granary to get rid of a few rats. If Paul told only the women to be quiet because of false teachers – he would be an extraordinary chauvinist indeed. For this would make Paul a man who when some women have a problem, shuts up the whole lot of them, but when men have a problem, allows them to keep talking and teaching. Such a scenario is sheer nonsense.

**4. Paul himself denies a local cause to the argument about women.** His appeal is not to any situation at Ephesus. A fundamental rule of hermeneutics is that the immediate context is always to be preferred over the distant context. And Paul tells us why he is giving this command. His appeal is to no situation in Ephesus, but rather to the situation that existed at the creation of the world. We simply have to let Paul speak for himself. By virtue of the fact that he uses a causal clause makes this a simple matter. His reason for the command is found in the Garden of Eden, not the Church of Ephesus. Hence Paul makes no mention of anything local in Ephesus that brings about this command.

**5. 1 Timothy 5 is not a text simply for Ephesus.** Feminist theologians argue that since 1 Timothy 5 can only be applied locally, why not 1 Timothy 2. They point out that Paul wants young widows to marry in this chapter, but encourages them not to marry in 1 Corinthians 7.

But we disagree. Most conservative theologians see no discrepancy between 1 Timothy 5 and 1 Corinthians 7. Paul advises marriage to young widows for exactly the same reason in both texts, and in 1 Corinthians advises remaining single for an entirely different reason.

**6. Paul did not write 1 Timothy because of false teachers.** Again, the argument from feminist theologians is that the entire reason for writing 1 Timothy is local. But we disagree. Were there false teachers in Ephesus? Yes. Was Paul concerned to stop them? Yes. Did he tell Timothy how to do so? Yes. Is this why Paul wrote the book? NO!

Here again, we must let Paul tell us why he wrote this book. He tells us, most specifically in 1 Timothy 3:14-15. ***I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth.***” In other words, proper behavior in the household of God is a buttress against error. If the Ephesians had behaved themselves well, the false teachers would not have gained a foothold. Hence, the book is about proper behavior and not about arguments against the false teachers. The false teachers have arisen precisely because proper behavior had not been stressed. The same is true in every church today. Proper behavior in the house of God is poison to any false teaching. Hence the book must be normative, against any and all false teaching. Here we see how applicable it is today.

**7. Showing the historical background of a text does not make it irrelevant to today.**

All of the Bible – including the teachings of Jesus as a Passover lamb have historical background. Even Galatians 3:23 is written against the background of the Judiazers. Much of Romans 3 has the same background. Are we then to discount the substitutionary atonement of Christ because the background is that of Judaism, with its sacrificial ritual?

**8. This kind of hermeneutic puts us on a slippery slope.** We must ask, if this method of Bible Study is adopted, where will it lead? If the background of a text allows us to apply it locally only, what doctrine will be safe. Here is my chief reason for writing about this subject. If this were simply a matter of women in ministry, I would simply allow for differences in the body of Christ. But what is being done to the scripture will

indeed change the very nature of the faith, and leave the next generation with a very different view of Christianity. Consider one feminist author, who wants to put every passage through a series of 17 tests, in order to understand its trajectory, so that we might see whether we should take it as normative teaching! In this schema, we will never again be able to say, “The Bible says it, and that settles it!”

So then – what are we left with? We are left with a text that is meant for us today. They should obey it in Ephesus and we should obey it in Canada.

## **B. Exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:1-11**

### **1. 2:11 *Let a woman learn quietly and with all submissiveness.***

#### ***a. Were women illiterate or uneducated and therefore incapable of teaching?***

The term learning indicates learning through the instruction of others. Some have taught that in the first century world, many women would have been illiterate. This is overstated. Steven Baugh, an expert in the history of Ephesus points out that many men and women had basic literary skills. Both Plato and Aristotle taught that both men and women should have the same education and training. Romans 16:1 introduces us to a woman named Phoebe, who is a wealthy business woman with a large household, and international business interests. The idea of illiterate, undereducated women in the Greco Roman world is vastly overstated.

On top of that, it should be noted that the Bible never requires an advanced degree to be a leader or teacher. Besides as it had been shown, women were to instruct other women in Ephesians 5. How could they do this if their education level was so poor that instruction were impossible? Besides, we do know that there were also uneducated illiterate men in the ancient world, and Paul never prevents their leadership in the church.

But then, Paul does say that women are to learn. Many of us are aware of Jesus’ attitude to the woman at the well in John 4. Rabbis would not even have addressed a woman. The Babylonian Talmud suggests that men should come to learn, but women should come only to hear. Paul will have none of that. He, like Jesus, gives priority to Mary over Martha. To learn is to do the best. Women should learn the deep truths of the faith.

#### ***b. Is quietness an offensive term?***

They should learn in quietness. This should offend no one today. It simply means to learn without creating a disturbance. This command has led some to believe that the church in Ephesus was filled with all manner of disturbance, but Paul does not specifically say this. Those who suggest it often do so by trying to make the argument specific only to the Ephesian situation. But such a conclusion is simply not warranted. Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:12 enjoins the same command for everyone. People are to do their work quietly. It would seem that quiet activity is a mark of Christian behavior. But even non Christian audiences would afford the same courtesy. After a near riot, Acts 21:40 tells us that the crowd became quiet when Paul began to speak. Quietness indicates a style of learning, a style that is attentive but is also in keeping with Christian social behavior.

#### ***c. Is submission an offensive term?***

They should learn with all submission. The word submission is the same word that is often used of Christians in their submission to God the Father. Colossians 3:18 uses the

same word of Christian wives submission to their husbands. Ephesians 5:21 would have all Christians submit to each other. Most profoundly, the Bible states over and over again, that Christ was submissive to the Father. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us that the Father and the Son are fully equal, fully divine from all eternity, yet the Son has a unique role in submitting to his Father. Evidently, submission is not considered either weakness or inferiority in the Biblical worldview.

It should be noted that the grammar of the submission of women to their husbands suggests a voluntary, not forced submission that is not a submission of a child to a parent or a slave to his master, rather a submission that is voluntarily offered by the wife, who is an equal to her husband, after the order of the Son to the Father.

In 1 Timothy, her submission is the norm for the relationship of men and women in the church. That women should learn next to the men is indeed a revolutionary idea, but Paul makes it plain that this should not be an occasion to overthrow the role in which men and women function in the household of God. In order to demonstrate that further, Paul makes it clear that he expects she should learn with “all” submission. Other translations use the word “entire” or “full”. This then means to the highest degree possible. Paul shows that his concern that the radical freedom he gives women should not overturn his other concerns.

Before we go to the next verse, it is right to observe that verse 11 cannot be used as a passage which tells us what role women are to play in ministry. Verse 11 is a verse that tells how women are to prepare for ministry. What role he gives to ministry of women is worked out in the next verses.

## ***2. 2:12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather she is to remain quiet.***

### ***a. The use of “I” does not make this Paul’s personal opinion.***

There are those who argue that verse 12 is Paul’s personal opinion alone. The argument is made because of the opening words, “I do not”. This is said to contrast a command that comes from the Lord. Also, there are those who say the grammar suggests Paul is only making a temporary ban. But this would be a strange hermeneutic indeed. It would suggest that whenever Paul uses the phrase, “I do not”, or even begins with “I” followed by the present tense, he means to signal us that he is now taking what he is saying as a personal temporary command rather than a divine forever command. Let us put this theory to the test. 1 Timothy 2:1. “I urge that prayers... be made for all people. Romans 12:1 I appeal to you... to present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Ephesians 4:1 “I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling. Romans 11:25. I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel. Are we to understand that Paul, not the Lord wants us to know the mystery of the hardening of Israel? Or consider 1 Corinthians 10:20. “I do not want you to be participants with demons.” Or think of the very well known 1 Corinthians 12:1. “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.” In other words, don’t think it a divine command, but rather a personal opinion for the time only that you should know your spiritual gift, avoid the cup of demons and walk worthy of your calling. Clearly this approach to scripture would begin to make a mockery out of all manner of Bible texts. I call us simply to reject it. It is not Biblical. Again we see why the method of Bible study in this text is so important.

***b. The restriction of women teaching is not unique to Ephesus.***

Many have pointed out a parallel to 1 Corinthians 14:33-34. *“As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the law says.”* Is this indeed what Paul has in mind in 1 Timothy? We will have to withhold judgment for the moment. But whatever Paul means, he does forbid a woman from providing instruction to a man. Under all circumstances? Only when the church is publicly gathered for instruction? What is meant? We will come back to this. But at the very least, we must see that there are some circumstances under which a woman may not teach. That much is abundantly plain.

***c. The word authenteo has been correctly translated. It refers to a legitimate use of authority.***

The Greek word to “exercise authority over, is the word **authenteo**. If I were an ink salesman, I would be very glad for all the ink that is spilled on this word alone. The Greek word is a *hapax lagumenon*, a word that is found in this place only in the entire New Testament. As of late, the claim is made that this word is not clear. It is argued that this word can mean to misuse authority or to domineer. In this case women are only not to misuse their authority. Others have said it can mean to proclaim oneself author of a man. Some even claim the word can mean to murder, so all Paul is asking a woman to do is not to murder a man. As a side note, if you are a feminist and are especially angry with me over this article, I would appreciate you translating the word just that way! Others even suggest that the word means to seduce a man. I invite anyone to try this translation out, and see if the text makes any sense that way.

What shall we say to this? None of us are Greek scholars. What should we do? I suggest the answer is not very difficult. I suggest two things. First, go those who have done primary Greek studies. And secondly, consider the context.

So, the primary studies. Let me quote from Wayne Grudem. *“In 1995, H. Scott Baldwin published the most thorough study of the verb authenteo that had ever been done. Several earlier studies had looked at a number of occurrences of this verb, but no one had ever looked at all the examples that exist from ancient literature and ancient papyrus manuscripts. Baldwin found eighty-two occurrences of authenteo in ancient writings, and he listed them all with the Greek text and English translation in a long appendix... What should be evident from this chart is that there were no negative examples of the word authenteo at or around the time of the New Testament.”* (pp. 307-308).

In fact, Baldwin found that all other examples – the negative ones comes from confusion over the spelling of the word or very late uses of the word – some 500 years later. In order to understand this, imagine we had today a controversy regarding what was meant in the Christmas Carol, “Deck the Halls with Bows of Holly”. What was at stake was the line, “Don we now our gay apparel.” Some among us said that it means that we should put on festive clothing which reflects a joyful attitude. Others say that it means we should come dressed in homosexual attire. We then do a word check and find that the word “gay” can be used in both ways, and hence, we say, we could really understand it both ways, since the term “gay” bears more than one meaning. But someone will say, “Wait a minute”. We are well served to ask whether the term “gay”

could every be translated as “homosexual” at the time of the writing of the old carol. And there is the answer.

The same is true for authenteo. Baldwin found that the only negative use of “exercise authority” occurs only 500 years later. At the time of the writing of this book, every use of the word referred to a legitimate use of authority. This quite simply is why all Bible translations have maintained the word, because that is what the word means. The evidence is overwhelming.

Now to the context. Context is everything. Paul is about to tell us that the reason for forbidding a woman’s exercise of authority, be that legitimate or illegitimate, is grounded in an order of creation. And then, past that, Paul is about to give Timothy instruction as to who may serve in the office of an elder. And interestingly enough, every quality expected of the elder is completely related to his character, that is, who he is and not what he does. This however has one exception. Paul demands that an elder be able to teach. Timothy himself is an elder, and Paul will later command him in 4:11 to teach. In 5:17 he will again remind elders that their primary function is teaching. In 6:2, he again reminds Timothy to teach and urge these things. This is all a function of his role as elder. Indeed, from this point on, from 1 Timothy 2:12 right through to the end of the book, the only kind of teaching that is ever commanded is the authoritative teaching of an elder pastor. Hence, it would seem that context has already cast the use of the word. Whatever teaching Paul has in mind cannot be taken out of context to the kind of teaching he has in mind in the entire book, which is the authoritative teaching of and elder.

***d. They key question: Are these two commands or one?  
- if two, he then forbids women from teaching publicly  
-if one, he then forbids women from teaching in the position of a specific authority***

The real question which must be considered then is whether the grammar of the passage suggests that the two commands, that is the command not to teach and the command to not to exercise authority should be taken as one command or should be understood as two commands. That forms a real live debate, and it would seem that one can make a considerable case for either one. If we take them as two commands, we would say that a woman may never teach a man and she may never exercise the position of leadership over a man. If on the other hand we take the two commands as one, we see a completely different picture. Taken as one command, we then read that women must never teach in the position of authority, or for our purposes, they may not teach in the position of a ruling elder. But seeing the command this way would not preclude her from teaching in thousands of other settings. How shall we decide? Most grammarians favor two commands, because that is a more natural reading. On the other hand, context may point us in a different direction. Since we are moving to the issue of eldership, Paul may have in mind to only restricts a woman from teaching as a ruling elder.

Please notice the real debate, if one is Biblical. Shall women be kept from every incident of teaching men, or shall they only be limited in playing a role as a teaching elder?

**e. It is wise to consider the wider New Testament practice, both of Jesus and the Early Church.**

Titus 2 has older women teaching younger women to be sure. One can see how important it is for a woman to learn the deep truths of the faith for that reason alone. But John 4 has the woman at the well teaching the entire village in Samaria that Jesus was the Christ. Priscilla was not doubt very instrumental in teaching Apollos the faith more accurately. See Acts 18:26. And the teaching profited 1 Corinthians 14 seems also to accord with this definition. From my reading of the New Testament, women are only prevented from teaching in the highest level of authority in the church that is as a ruling elder. Hence it is imperative to be clear what is the context of teaching elder. I would argue that if any place reflects the teaching role of elder, it is surely the pulpit.

***f. But why would Paul put such a restriction on women?***

### **3. 2:13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.**

***a. We will want to note the use of a causal clause.***

It does absolutely no good to speculate why Paul would place this restriction on women and then ignore the very plain reason that he has already given – right here in the text. Stop speculating why Paul gives this command, and let him explain it for himself. It is not a matter of culture that women were less trained than men and therefore could not yet be expected to teach as effectively as men. It is not a matter of the false teacher in the church who have subverted the way of the truth. As we have seen, they were men anyway. He does not mention the disorderliness of women, who in this church may have been unable to sit still. Paul must be allowed by us his readers to make the point he intends. And he, by virtue of a causal clause, tells us exactly why he commanded this. His appeal is to the creation account, and no amount of wriggling or embarrassment will allow us off this hook. These are Paul's own words, and this is his justification for the command given in verse 12.

***b. The reason women were not to teach as ruling elders has to do with the significance Paul places on the fact that men were created first.***

From the perspective of our culture, this is an insignificant matter, but not so from a Biblical viewpoint. The Bible gives preeminence to the idea of the first born. According to Exodus 12:12-13, every firstborn animal was to be sacrificed to the Lord. The firstborn child, the one that opened the womb was to be redeemed. The first fruits of all your wealth was to be offered to the Lord. The idea of tithing is still related to this. We ought to give off the top of our paycheck, before we have spent any of it, for the first is God's. God's great punishment on Egypt was that the firstborn was taken away. The firstborn son in Israel was to receive a double portion of the inheritance of his father. In fact, whenever this principle was violated, as it was for instance in the case of the choice of Isaac over Ishmael, the Bible makes much of it. It is as if we can hardly believe such a thing could happen.

***c. The Old Testament places a great stress of the idea of the firstborn.***

***d. The New Testament put just as much stress on the idea of firstborn.***

Jesus is called Mary's firstborn. Colossians 1:15 calls Jesus the firstborn of all creation. Hebrews 12:23 calls the church the church of the firstborn. Revelation 1:5 calls Jesus the firstborn from the dead. In every single case, mentioning the firstborn is always

to speak of pre-eminence. Those who are first are to lead those who come after them. That is one of the key reasons why parents lead their children. They came first, before the kids. We might not agree with this principle, but it is clearly laid out in both Testaments. So one must not overlook this as a minor detail. When Paul mentions Adam as created first, he gives Adam the same title the Creation account and the entire Old Testament gives. He has inherited by the sovereign design of God a position of leadership. Eve is to be his helper, a helper who is in fact his equal. This interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:13 has been considered orthodox Christian teaching of the church for 1900 years and is only challenged in light of feminist ideology.

#### **4. 2:14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.**

##### ***a. Paul appeals next to creation after the Fall.***

Here now is Paul's second reason for the command given in verse 12. His first was to appeal to an order of creation. His second is to appeal to the fall itself. Adam was not deceived. The woman was deceived. Paul reiterates the very same thing in 2 Corinthians 11:3. *"But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from your pure devotion to Christ."*

##### ***b. Paul is not necessarily saying women are more prone to deception.***

Is Paul telling us that this is how false teaching is propagated, through women's deception? I know there are many who make this point, but it must be noted that the text doesn't say that. It may be, as some have suggested that women are more relational, and men more propositionally oriented. This may be a factor, but we do well to leave such a matter to personal musings. And on a personal level, I have seen many women who are very well taught, and not at all more prone than men to false teachers. But what then is Paul's point? It seems that there is a difference in culpability between the man and the woman.

##### ***c. Paul is saying that men and women were condemned differently in the fall.***

The woman is condemned in the fall because she was deceived, and the man was condemned in the fall because he failed to exercise his leadership as firstborn. Both men and women are condemned in the fall, but their condemnation is related specifically to their roles related to their gender. Rather than submitting to the man, the woman submitted to the serpent. Rather than exercise his rights as firstborn, the man sold his birthright to Eve as Esau sold his to Jacob.

##### ***c. Hence what Paul wishes to accomplish in verse 14 is to show us the negative example of what follows when the man and the woman refuse to operate in their God ordained roles.***

This is exactly in line with the charge that God makes to Adam in Genesis 3:17. *"Because you listened to your wife"*. That is why God condemns him. Adam and Eve are condemned separately and directly related to their God ordained roles.

## **5. 2:15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith and love and holiness with self control.**

a. Now comes the tough passage. Saved through childbearing. What can that mean? I have spent some time in Romania, where the Pentecostal church has taught that women must have a great deal of children in order to be saved. The great tragedy of some of the orphans there came because some of these poor families simply could not support the children they were producing and so effectively abandoned them. The idea that a woman could not be saved without having children is at best, a highly unlikely interpretation of this text. To posit it would be to deny the very heart of Pauline theology and make his writings hopelessly contradictory. Another possibility is given by the NIV, which interprets this text as saying a woman will be kept safe through the bearing of children. But this also seems unlikely. First of all, I suspect that just as many Christian women have died in childbirth as have pagan women. And secondly, the idea of personal bodily safety is not the normal usage that Paul puts into the word *sozo* (to save). Reading the NIV on this point gives one the impression they are trying harder to solve a difficult puzzle than to actually translate a Greek text. Others have suggested that this passage refers to the spiritual salvation of the woman through the birth not of children but of the child, meaning Christ. But we again have difficulties here, because the text does not speak of one child but of children. What then do we make of this difficult text?

b. I think that Bruce Waltke has offered up what I think to be the best solution. He points out first of all that Paul's thoughts are taken up in the creation and fall accounts of Genesis 1-3. Would it not be wise to understand this text in these terms? Hence Waltke looks to Genesis 3:15 for the answer. Just as Genesis 3:15 provides salvation to the woman over the deceptive serpent at the dawn of creation, so now 1 Timothy 3:15 provides an equal answer to the deceptive serpent led by false teachers in Ephesus. But what is that answer? Genesis 3:15 provides the woman with hope. Her seed will crush the head of the serpent. There is every reason to believe that she may have thought that Cain was the answer to her dream of the defeat of the serpent, but he was not. What a cruel irony. But eventually Christ would be born of a woman, and would fulfill the promise made in Genesis 3:15. The woman's seed has indeed triumphed over evil. But what has this history of Eve to do with women now that the promised seed has come, and Satan has been crushed? How is the bearing of children to result in salvation on this side of the Christ event? Waltke comments.

*“God elevates godly mothers to a high status after the fall. In sovereign grace he changed the fallen woman's affection to enmity against Satan. I will put enmity between you and the woman. By his promise to give this new woman a triumphant, though suffering, offspring, he implicitly assigned her the role of bearing the seed that would destroy the Serpent, the Adversary of God and humanity. The quintessential expression of that seed is Christ, who defeated Satan on the cross, but the mandate finds its fulfillment in every covenant child: “The God of peace”, says the apostle to the church at Rome, “will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Romans 16:20). In response to the promise to give the woman seed to defeat Satan, believing Adam named his wife Eve, “because she would become the mother of all he living.” (Gen 3:20). Every Christian mother by being in Christ bears his holy children (1 Cor 7:14). If a woman has suffered any loss of leadership through her creation and through her historical guilt by Satan's deception, in contrast to Adam, in connection with the Fall, says the Apostle – if I*

*understand him correctly – she will be saved from that loss through bearing children in Christ, if the children continue in the faith, love and holiness with propriety. In short, the Apostle is saying, “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world”.*

I think Waltke has it. Full devotion given to raising a the next godly generation is the spells the defeat of Satan, and gives the woman an honor that men simply cannot inherit. Paul therefore commends to women a role that our society denigrates. Our society believes that honor cannot come to a woman until she leaves the home and competes in the same job market as men, sharing an exactly similar role to men. Paul turns that reasoning on its head. Full honor cannot come to a woman until she understand the sacred calling that his been given her life. To disciple her children well, and then when she has completed that task, to pour out her life into discipling the next generation of mothers to do the same. This does not mean she cannot instruct and teach at a number of different levels, but if she robs the man of his role, she will also rob herself of his role.

## **C. Conclusion**

### **1. This discussion is about the roles of men and women.**

The debate as it has raged in many churches tends to be framed as a debate about the ministry of women. Those of us on the other side of that debate stand amazed that no one is even respecting us enough to hear what it is we have to say. Those of us who are complementarians are just as concerned for the roles of men as we are for the roles of women. For us, this has always been a question of what it means to be a man and a woman of God, not an attempt as some would frame it, to keep women from their God ordained calling. It is exactly the God ordained calling which we wish to discuss.

Recently on a trip to Ontario, my wife was sitting beside another woman going on the plane. They found they both went to M.B. churches. Kathy was asked what her role was in the church, whether she was a teacher or a leader. It all seemed like a test to she if she was truly the right kind of woman. When it was found she did not teach, she was treated with overt scorn. No question was raised about her children, whether they will be godly or about her role as mother. I have listened to many women who have complained that not even in the church are they safe to take upon themselves the role of a godly mother – a role that would afford honor and prestige. My cry is for men and women to be given the kind of honor the Bible speaks of.

### **2. The new Testament is not regressive in our day.**

It has been stated that the reason the New Testament does not present an egalitarian view is because they knew the world was not yet ready for it, even as it was not yet ready for the emancipation of slaves. To state it that way, is to throw Paul’s reasoning in the trash. Paul never argues the issue of slavery from creation.

### **3. Every single reference to an elder in the New Testament is in fact male.**

There are no exceptions. Some argue that Romans 16:7 gives Junia the status of apostle. But the grammar does not indicate that she was more than well thought of by the apostles. How amazing it would be, if apostolic status were conferred of someone of whom we have never heard? Even in the case of 1 Timothy 5:2, the context is clearly

that of older women, not in the sense of ruling elder. Paul's overwhelmingly male language in 1 Timothy 3 only highlights what is on his mind. The idea of female elders is clearly something he is not considering. Furthermore, Jesus only chose male apostles. No New Testament book is written by a woman. There are no examples of female teachers of men in the entire New Testament.

#### **4. The Bible is clear on this matter, not vague.**

In a very real way, we must consider this hermeneutical exercise as the putting together of pieces in a puzzle. Once all the pieces fit, it is a good indication that what we have is the picture. Stating the case as we have, that only eldership is kept from women is consistent with every single New Testament passage. Some speak of diversity, but it would depend upon what he means. If diversity means that the Bible expresses truth in many ways, I say Amen. If it means the Bible speaks on a diverse manner of topics, I again say Amen. But if diversity means that the Bible does not present us with one picture, that there is no real unity in the Bible, that the Bible speaks out of both sides of its mouth on a single issue, I respond – NO. In that case, there is no diversity in the Bible. None at all. God does not say Yes on one hand and then No on another.

#### **5. All gifts and all ministries are open to men and women without reference to gender.**

The only thing that the New Testament restrains is that of elder. So if the egalitarian says, but look at the role given to women in the New Testament, the complementarian agrees. We want to say it as loudly and as joyfully as the egalitarian. We would encourage greater participation of both men and women in our churches. We would encourage the egalitarians among us to show us more of the scripture that helps us see the role of women. But we would discourage the taking of restrictive texts and throwing them on the ash heap of history, only applicable to a time gone by.

#### **6. Shall our daughters prophesy? YES!**

In the Old Testament, everything is open to women as well. Women served as prophetesses. In fact Huldah was remarkable during the reformation of Josiah, mentioned in 2 Kings 22:3-20. She was called upon to verify the book of the law found in the temple. Surely hers was a teaching role. Mothers stood on equal footing with fathers in teaching their children. (Proverbs 31:26) But women never served in the role of a priest. That was a role of leadership reserved for men alone. So I must say on a personal note, when our denomination produced a book entitled, "Your daughters shall prophesy, some of us responded by saying, "Why did it take you so long to figure that out"? But there has been in this a complete lack of clarity. We have not defined our terms well.

#### **7. Jesus was entirely complementarian.**

The idea that all roles except the highest roles of leadership are open to all corresponds perfectly with the ministry of Jesus. It tells us why Jesus could be so radical in his relationship with women and at the same time appoint no women among his 12 disciples.

**8. So – should women lead? Yes!**

Should women teach? Yes. Should they learn and go to seminary? Yes. Should they lead worship? Yes. Should they teach other men the way of truth more accurately? Yes.

**9. Should they serve as ruling and teaching elder? No – for this upsets the very foundation of God’s design in creation.**

The New Testament is absolutely consistent in its teaching that men provide key and pivotal rulership to the church of Jesus Christ. The state of leadership is profoundly based upon the leadership roles in the family. To unseat this plain teaching of scripture is to throw both the church and the family into chaos, the very kind of chaos that now prevails both in the church and family.

I end with this question. How shall we teach our sons to be men and our daughters to be women when we, like the culture in which we presently live, have not the faintest idea of the kind of role that engenders? If the world is unclear, let us be clear. To God be the glory!