Are Women Permitted to Teach and Have Authority?

1 Timothy 2:11-15

Today before I begin my message from 1 Timothy 2, I wanted to share a humorous video from YouTube that I found during my studies this week. Sometimes, when dealing with the ageless difficulties between men and women, it’s good to bring a little humor in the mix.

**YOUTUBE VIDEO**

Last week I told you that I was going to share from 1 Timothy 2, since in 1 Corinthians 14, we saw the apostle Paul dealing with questions with regard to the roles of men and women in the church. 1 Timothy was written by Paul, to Timothy a pastor of the Church in Ephesus.

Beginning in Chapter 2, with verse 1:

2 I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. 2 Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. 3 This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. 5 For,

There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. 6 He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.

This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time. 7 And I have been chosen as a preacher and apostle to teach the Gentiles this message about faith and truth. I’m not exaggerating—just telling the truth.

8 In every place of worship, I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God, free from anger and controversy.

9 And I want women to be modest in their appearance. 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. 10 For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do.

11 Women should learn quietly and submissively. 12 I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. 13 For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. 14 And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.

Before we get any deeper in this today, let’s talk a bit about the historical context of this letter.

Paul was writing to Timothy who was a leader of the church in Ephesus. Ephesus was the location of the largest temple for the worship of the Greek Goddess Diana. In fact, one source said that the temple grounds were 21 times the size of the Solomon’s temple. Another interesting tidbit of historical context is that all of the priests who served in the cult of Artemis were women. Women who believed in their superiority to men. As H.M. Conn wrote in “The Effect of Sin upon Covenant Mutuality:”

“Some proponents of this cult spoke of the first woman as the conduit of light and life who brought divine enlightenment to humanity. They asserted that Eve existed before creation, consorting with celestial beings.[15]

Consequently, these priestesses wielded tremendous power, were considered superior to men, and dominated over them.”

Another Historian wrote:

“Plutarch (46–122 AD) affirmed Cato the Elder’s (234–149 BC) severe criticism of the prevalent domination by women by quoting him as saying, “All mankind rules its women, and we rule all mankind, but our women rule us.”

 Translation (By Frank Cole Babbit) from Plutarch, Regum et Imperatorum Apophthegmata

Hopefully, this background helps you to understand why Paul wrote these things to Timothy. As I have shared in past sermons, he is not trying to shut women up in church. He is writing to confirm that women should not try and forcefully take over, based on a view of their superiority.

Let’s look, again, at 1 Timothy 2:11-15:

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Let’s take it verse by verse.

Vs. 11 Women should learn quietly and submissively. (Women should learn…They shouldn’t cause division…and they shouldn’t try to berate men.)

Vs. 12 I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly…There are many ways this can be interpreted, but in light of the context I believe that Paul is speaking to women who wrongfully believe that their authority and teaching is on a higher spiritual level than the men. The Greek word for “authority” that is used here is only used once in the whole Bible and the word means to forcefully or wrongfully usurp authority.

Vs. 13-14 For God Made Adam First, and afterward He made Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result…This statement was made to directly speak against the false belief that Eve was made first (or even eternal) in other words Paul is dispelling the myth of female superiority. He was not making the statement to promote male superiority. Men and women alike are sinners. Eve was deceived, Adam sinned willfully and knowingly.

Vs. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty…Now we see Paul point out something that women can do that men cannot do. It was Eve (and further down the line) Mary who gave birth to the Savior. Every good preacher and teacher of good doctrine was born of a woman and women can find fulfillment in that in ways that men can’t.

I say all of this to confirm what I have said before about men and women and husbands and wives. We are dependent upon each other. God put us in this together. When Ephesians 5 says:

22 For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

The very next verses say:

25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God’s word. 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. 28 In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30 And we are members of his body.

31 As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.”

God wants that we as Christians would demonstrate the opposite of the curse. The curse of sin is the reason that youtube video was so relevant and hits so close to home. Since the first sin, the sons of Adam have had the propensity to be tyrants and the daughter’s of Eve have tried to be Lords of the tyrants.

Instead, God wants us to be united in purpose and excited about our God given roles. Man has been given a special responsibility to demonstrate Christ like leadership (Which leads to the death of the ego and servant leadership) and Christian women have been commanded to quit thinking that their job is to rule men and set them straight.

It seems like “attitude is everything here.”

Do I think men can learn from women? Yes.

Do I think women can have leadership roles over men? Yes.

Do I think that it is easy for women to bring division by usurping authority? Yes. (And it was especially true in Ephesus.)

Do I think men have been given a special responsibility to be leaders? Yes.

Do I think that husbands, and men in general, have a tendency to be tyrants instead of servant, Christ-like, leaders? Yes.

Do I think women have been given the difficult (anti-curse) command of respecting men’s (especially their husband’s) leadership? Yes.

Throughout the history of Bonney Lake Community Church we have practiced the belief that men have been given the responsibility to serve in the role of elder. We believe that because, we have interpreted scriptures in 1 Timothy and Titus, on eldership, as prescriptive. It seems that God, from the beginning, gave man a unique responsibility in leading the family and the church family. Just as God has given women unique responsibilities. But in no way does this belief disqualify women from teaching and leading in other areas.

1. Deborah was a Judge and a prophet (Judges)

2. Miriam was one of the leaders of Israel during the Exodus (Exodus 15; Micah 6:4)

3. Huldah the prophetess had a leading role in restoring the nation of Israel (2 Kings 22)

4. Esther was a Queen you think that she didn’t have rightful authority over some men?

5. Mary and Martha ministered close to Jesus

6. Mary Magdalene very well could be called the first apostle of Jesus. Since she was the first person to see Him after His resurrection. (John 20:14)

7. Lydia was a prominent business owner (Acts 16)

8. Phoebe was a deacon (Romans 16)

9. Priscilla was a business owner and along with her husband she helped teach the apostle Paul. (Acts 18:26)

10. The four daughters of Phillip were prophets. (Acts 21:9)

As Christians lets make every effort to stop displaying the curse of sin. Instead we can demonstrate to the rest of the world how men and women, and husbands and wives, can serve with each other and support one another in the roles God has given us.

Men don’t be authoritative tyrants.

And women don’t make it your goal to try and be the rulers of tyrants.