

## 2-19-23 – Women’s Role in the Church Study

Question: Why are we studying two texts (1 Corinthians 14:34-35 & 1 Timothy 2: 11-15) so closely?

The Bible is complicated enough that whenever you make a conclusion about almost any important topic based on all of scripture, you can always find a few “problem texts” within scripture that seem to contradict it.

- Example: Based on the overarching story of scripture (Creation, Fall, Law, Sacrificial System, Jesus, Church, Life after Death) it is relatively easy to conclude that a clear Biblical, Gospel, Kingdom truth is that YOU ARE SAVED BY GOD’S GRACE, NOT BY YOUR WORKS.
  - Supportive text (one of many very clear on this): Ephesians 2:8-9 – *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”*
  - Two “problem texts” that seem to stand in opposition to this:
    - James 2:17 – *“Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”*
    - Rev 20:12-13 – *“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”*
  - Two mistakes made with “problem texts”:
    - Throw them out as worthless (not typically our problem).
    - Make the “problem texts” into “primary texts” (often our problem).
  - What then should we do when we find that a straightforward, simple reading of a scripture does not seem to align with the rest of scripture? STUDY THE CONTEXT.
- This explains why we are taking our time with 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2.

1 Tim 2:8-15 – *“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. 9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. 11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing — if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”*

**Option 1: The literal, straightforward reading of this text.** [Stems from hermeneutical approaches of: “Direct Command, Authorized Example, Necessary Inferences”, “Speak where the Bible speaks, silent where the Bible is silent”, and “It says it right there in black and white – it means what it says and says what it means.”]

- Even those who think they do, they do not believe in or practice this with this text. Other wise they would believe things like...
  - Vs. 8 - Men must pray with hands raised. Not women (that would adding to the text).
  - Vs. 9 – Women are not to wear braided hear, gold or pearls, or expensive clothes (and we would need to define what is meant by expensive). Additionally, this is all that Paul means by modesty, so he is not speaking about other modern modesty standards.
  - Vs. 11 – When women learn, no questions allowed (“in quietness”), no challenging of what they are learning (“full submission”).
  - Vs. 12 – No sharing what you’ve learned with other men (no teaching or authority over a man, “she must be silent”).
  - Vs. 13-14 – tough to gleam definitive truth from these with literal, straightforward approach.
  - Vs. 15 – Women are saved by having a child. But even then, only if they live faithfully enough.

- Even if we somehow justified picking out vs. 11-12 alone, AND wanted to insist that what Paul intended was silence/submission restrictions of women’s role in the church, you would be left not with 2 problem texts, but with the rest of the Bible’s story, as well as dozens of specific passages and examples, as a “problem texts”.

Scot Mcknight - *“If women did all this, why does Paul speak of silencing women in public assemblies? How does such silencing fit within the theme of oneness – of God’s work of redemption, restoring men and women into unity in Christ? This is where reading the Bible as Story becomes important. Furthermore, it means that though we may read the Bible with tradition (where women are silenced), we are at times called to challenge the tradition.”*

John Mark Hicks - *“These women spoke the word of the Lord, led the people of God, and authorized deeds and laws which Israel obeyed. None of this violated God’s intent in creation. God does not gift women and sanction the use of their gifts in ways that inherently violate God’s own intent in creation. ...These women exercised authority over men in various contexts and diverse ways. Perhaps Paul meant something different than I had always assumed.”*

**Option 2: Read text through the lenses of Story, Wisdom, & Love** [Takes much more time to dive into any Bible scriptures context, but problem texts in particular demand it.]

What are the relevant contextual backdrops that help us interpret 1 Timothy?

**This Book is Personal Letter from Paul to Timothy.**

- “Pastoral Epistles” = 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus.
- “Low-context” books by nature. Less than letters written to whole churches.
- Paul spent 2-3 years in Ephesus, much of that with Timothy. They know each other & context.
- Should approach (1) humbly, knowing that we may just be too distant to know everything definitely, and (2) should begin with skepticism that this letter was intended for all churches.

**The Worship of Artemis in Ephesus**

- Temple of Artemis central to all aspects of life (beliefs, social structures, economy (Acts 19)).
- Relevant Back story: When Artemis was born, she helped her mom Leto in with the 9-day labor and birth of her brother.
  - Artemis was the protector of women during childbirth.
  - Artemis was created first, so she was considered superior to Apollo.
  - And the religion and worship of Artemis in Ephesus was woman-driven. The clergy at the Temple were women priestesses, and their leadership was very assertive and vocal.

**Jewish Culture Concerning Women**

- In the Law, women were things not persons. Entirely at disposal of father/husband.
- A woman was forbidden to learn the law. The only reason to learn is to teach, and women don’t.

**The Problem Being Addressed by 1 (& 2) Timothy: False Teaching and False Teachers**

- Clearly the problem, but the specific problems unclear [1 Timothy 1:3-6, 18-20; 4:1-7; 5:13-15; 6:3-5, 20-21; 2 Timothy 2:14-123; 3:5-7; 4:3-4; Acts 20:29-31]
- Clues on subject matter include:
  - Myths and genealogies being passed around
  - Forbidding of people to marry
  - The idea that godliness is a means to financial gain

- The “resurrection of the dead” had already taken place
- How these false things were infiltrating the church:
  - “Old wives tales” (1 Tim 4:7) implies elderly women perpetuating “godless myths”
  - Young widows going from house to house “talking nonsense” (Paul: “giving Satan opportunity”) (1 Tim 5:12-14)
  - Men with a “form of godliness” that is not Gospel “working their way into the homes” to sway gullible women (2 Tim 3:6)
  - Acts 20:30-31 – *“Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!”*
- You get the idea that bad men are being intentionally deceiving, convincing women who then became “spreaders” of falseness and it was permeating the church community (2 Tim 2:17 – *“spread like gangrene”*).

### Greek Vocabulary

- “hesuchadzo” - Vs. 11 – *“A woman should learn in quietness”* – Vs. 12 – *“She must be silent.”*
  - There are 5 Greek words that can be interpreted “silence.”
    - hesuchadzo – peaceful, calm, cause no disturbance (not silent, but quiet (in spirit)
    - katastello – quiet down, cease from loudness
    - phimoo – to muzzle, force speechlessness
    - sigao – hold one’s speech and be silent
    - siopao –unable to speak.
  - Paul uses the 1<sup>st</sup> one here. If wanted to command outright silence of these women, in the church or otherwise, any of the 4 other words would have been closer to that.
    - Vs 11 - *“A woman should learn in peaceableness.”*
    - Vs 12 - *“She must be peaceable.”*
    - Same word is used in vs. 2 – *“[I urge that that you pray] for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives.”*
- “authentein” - Vs. 12 – *“I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man.”*
  - This is the ONLY place this word is used in scripture. (Means it’s hard to interpret)
  - Paul talks about authority all the time, but never this obscure word.
  - Must go outside the Bible for context, and it used to speak of when someone attempts “to force someone to do something they don’t want to do”; domineer; dominate; tyrannize
  - PC Study Bible’s Greek dictionary says “to lord it over”
  - Paul is prohibiting what he would prohibit anyone (whether it happened to be women or men) from doing: being domineering, inappropriately forceful, authoritarian, bossy or bullying. Particularly if what they were teaching was compromised with falsehoods.
  - This is would have been totally consistent with how women exerted leadership in the Artemis religion. Forceful and loud. Which leads us to one more relevant backdrop...

### Syncretism

- Syncretism in the blending of two ideas, philosophies, or religions. (Alexander the Great made it common, learning that conquering people groups was easier if you integrated, rather than try to destroy, that people’s group religion or gods.)
- So while these women had become Christian, they are likely merging their old religious beliefs, stories, behaviors, and practices WITH their newfound faith in Jesus.

Possible applications of context to verses 11-12 – *“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.”*

- *“A woman should learn”* would have stuck out more than it does to us. Up until Jesus, a woman didn’t learn, because a woman is not expected to teach.
- The implication is that a woman should learn before she teaches.
  - *“In quietness”* and without *“assuming authority”* means to stop dominated the conversation with your compromised teaching, and listen peaceably to what is being taught.
  - *“In full submission”* could mean to the pure truth of the gospel, educated out of the distortions that are mixed in (be those from Artemis religion leftovers or false teachers influence)

Possible applications of context to verses 13-15 - *“For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing — if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”*

- Vs. 13 - Part of the theological basis for these women to lead forcefully was because Artemis was born first. Paul may very well be arming Timothy with a confronting idea, saying, *“Look, that premise is not legit. We don’t dictate superiority over each other based on birth order in Christianity. But even if we did, your new religion has it the other way in our story: Adam was formed first, then Eve.”*
- Vs. 14 – In addressing the danger of these women infiltrating the false teaching, Paul could be saying: *“Be aware that this has happened before: Just like Eve was deceived by Satan, and then went with her compromised thinking to Adam, and then Adam compromised what he knew to be right, you have been been deceived by these false teachers, and if you forcefully teach those things as truth, others might also be persuaded.”* This was support for his exhortation for them to *“learn first”* before teaching.
- Vs. 15 – It is likely that these women were having difficulty with fully letting go of their Artemis worship because they still needed her in order to be saved through childbirth. Paul is arming Timothy with the persuasive assurance for their followership of God through Jesus has got them covered on that.

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Evaluated here are two approaches to this text and corresponding conclusions based on each.

1. Reading this text in a straightforward, literal way, and concluding that this is a restrictive passage for women’s role in the church at all places, in all churches, for all time.
2. Reading this text as a letter from Paul to Timothy, instructing him to address a specific situation at a specific time in a specific church dealing with a unique set of circumstances, and concluding that this is not a restrictive passage for women’s role in the church today.

Based on our evaluation of each, and especially in light of the trajectory of overarching story, and in light of the rest of scripture’s prophecies and overt statements concerning God’s desire for gender roles, and examples of women speaking and wielding authority among the people of God in both Israel and the Church, we must conclude the latter. And that even if there are unanswered questions concerning some details about this text, it is safer to do so.