

I have a lengthy quote that I will begin with today. Chuck Swindoll knows how to set up today's passage better than anyone I know. He writes:

Imagine yourself a modern-day Rip Van Winkle, waking after a slumber that began in 1970. After a long stretch and a wide yawn, you return to a culture that has changed significantly. Technology, transportation, economics, government, and even family life have changed radically while you were asleep. Now imagine returning to church the first time after awakening. The hymnals are gone, there's a coffee shop right next to a bookstore in the oversized vestibule, a rock band has replaced the pipe organ, and the guy next to you is reading his Bible from a handheld computer. You might also notice a significant change in the women around you.

In fact, I see at least three realms that have seen dramatic changes for women.

The first is *the domestic realm*. Before 1970, most women tended the home and nurtured their children while their husbands earned the income for the entire family. Now, the majority of women hold jobs outside the home, either to supplement the household income or because they head a single-parent family. The dwindling numbers of stay-at-home moms frequently feel scorned rather than supported for their dedication. Furthermore, they are often misunderstood as lazy or weak.

The second is *the business realm*. There are some things women just didn't do before the 1970s. Women didn't report the news, or cover a sporting event, or go to combat, or fly airplanes, or run corporations, or take up any role traditionally filled by men. Today, not only do most adult women earn a wage outside the home, they make up nearly 50 percent of the workforce. Now women are respected far more than exploited. Laws do a better job protecting women from harassment or abuse from co-workers, and women are encouraged to be not only assertive but aggressive in pursuit of their careers. Consequently, men have gradually accepted female co-workers as peers in the business world, which undoubtedly has impacted their view of women as mates and mothers as well.

The third is *the church realm*, without a doubt the most complicated and confusing of all. Women today inhabit a much broader secular world than the narrow path expected before the 1970s. Many would naturally expect a woman's role within the church to change just as dramatically. It should be no surprise, then, to see that many mainline denominations and several independent associations have adjusted their interpretation of Scripture—or simply ignored it altogether—and started ordaining women as priests and senior pastors. After all, if a woman can steer a corporation or pilot a commercial airliner, why can't she shepherd a flock?

Some conservative churches responded by adjusting their interpretation of Scripture, adopting an overly literal hermeneutic. This took the role of women backward. Unfortunately, these churches did just as much violence to the words of the apostles Peter and Paul as their liberal counterparts. They claimed to hold Scripture as their primary authority. While I don't doubt their sincerity, it appears the "ideal" they tried to uphold didn't come from the Bible as much as from popular culture icons of the 1950s. Television shows such as *Leave It to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best* **cemented** a particular image of women in the minds of most Americans, which easily can become the grid through which we read God's Word in the twenty-first century. And I admit, because that era defined my own childhood, I must be careful to set aside my preconceptions.

The fact is, the family of two thousand years ago did not fit the modern "nuclear family" model we have come to regard as ideal. Moreover, the woman described in Proverbs 31:10–31 is a remarkably powerful, business-savvy, entrepreneurial partner co-leading a large family enterprise with her husband. The sage describes a woman that many ultraconservatives would find presumptuous, or even threatening.

While believers must be careful not to separate their lives into sacred and secular realms—we are, after all, "consecrated" men and women wherever we go—we must, nevertheless, recognize that the church is not the world. "You've come a long way, baby" has no place in the Lord's domain. Neither does the heartwarming postwar prototype of June Cleaver. The Lord doesn't expect us to shed our society completely upon entering the church; He patiently endures the ebb and flow of cultural trends. In His house, however, our attitudes and

fashions must fit within certain guidelines. Those guidelines are set forth in the timeless words of Holy Scripture.

... [P A U S E] ... Let me SLOWLY repeat those last words: *Those guidelines are set forth in the timeless words of Holy Scripture.*

If you haven't already guessed... today we approach one of the major battlefields of Scripture. ... many believers have fought and are still fighting over this section. Bodies lay strewn of pastors (who... under the pressure of feminism)... have abandoned Biblical accuracy... in favor of culture and political correctness. ... [P A U S E] ... But we simply must approach this text thoroughly and honestly with regard to its meaning while also considering the whole counsel of Scripture.

The immediate context of our passage today (as you will recall from the previous one - last week's passage) is prayer. Paul made the point to Timothy in verses 1-8 (of 1 Timothy chapter 2)... that evangelistic prayer is a priority. We ended last week on verse 8 which describes the attitude by which men in every place are to pray. They are to lift up holy hands without anger and quarreling.

You and I both know that some people have the wonderful ability to mouth eloquent prayers in a group... and give the impression that they REALLY know how to pray. But last week's passage and today's verses... teach us that internal character is far more important than outward appearance.

Now the first thing that I would like for you to notice about the very next verse (which begins this week's passage) is that verse 9 starts off: "*likewise also...*" (You see)... Prayer is still the issue here in verse 9. Paul will be telling women the way in which THEY are to pray in public. His emphasis

is going to be on their INNER adornment... rather than the OUTER adornment.

As the men are to show their right attitudes with “holy hands,” women also are expected to show a “holy attitude.” For them... it does not “dress to impress” at a worship service. Anyone who attempts to steal attention away from God and put it on themselves... is unqualified to lead prayer in public worship. Women are not to distract from the worship of God... by drawing attention to themselves.

1 Tim 2:9-10

When Paul writes that women should not have “*braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire,*” he is not attacking the way women dress... except as it is a display of what their heart attitude was.

Donald Guthrie says that *a woman’s mind is mirrored by her dress.* I believe that what he is saying is: “How a woman dresses shows whether she lives in prayer and devotion to God - or has deep feelings and desires for the world (either to be envied by other women or have the gaping attention of men.)” The way we dress is a vivid revelation of whether we are trying to get the Lord’s attention – or human attention.

Warren Wiersbe adds: “*A woman who depends only on externals will soon run out of ammunition! She may attract attention, but she will not win lasting affection.*”

Understanding what Paul wrote... (especially his word choice)... tells us that there is nothing wrong in trying to look nice... if the motive is right. For example... Paul’s use the word that is translated as “respectable apparel” (in verse 9) simply means: “decent and orderly.” “Put together” might be

another way to express the idea. It is related to the Greek word from which we get the English word “cosmetic.” ... A woman’s apparel should be decent... orderly... and in good taste. In other words... Christian women do not need to be drab... plain... or dull.

The word “modestly” (also found in verse 9) “ αἰδοῦναι ” has (at its core) the meaning “*lack of shame*” ... and I think Paul is indicating that a godly woman would be **ashamed** ... (she would feel guilty) ... if she distracted someone from worshipping God.

(Now)... the same principle of dressing for God... also applies to the other extreme. Some women (instead of dressing to the 9’s) go the other direction when dressing for worship. They purposely come to church looking frumpy (in their dullest dress... no make-up... no jewelry... their hair tightly pulled into a bun)... and they imagine that they are pleasing God by the way THEY dress.

But let’s be honest. They too are trying to attract attention to themselves. They want their non-stylish apparel to declare to others how spiritual they are. ... This is just as much a violation for how we declare holiness... as the flashy... high-faluting dressing up – is! ... Holiness is not declared by our manner of dress. A proud heart can just as easily try to conceal itself behind a mask of dulled-down dressing. It is still a pretense.

So let me make the first point from our passage – for how women are to show their holiness. ... When it comes to your worship apparel – extremes must be carefully avoided. Check your internal motives. God looks at the heart – not our externals.

Avoid the silly... ostentatious extremes we often see among those in the film industry... or on the fashion runways of New York and Paris. ...Instead of devoting untold hours and exorbitant sums to draw attention to yourself... or going the other direction toward dull drabness to make a point - cultivate inner beauty.

That is the first point that our passage makes. Now we come to the second point about a woman's holiness. (Remember what started this discussion. ... In order to lead prayer in public... there needs to be holiness... in both men and women who lead it.) The second point about a woman's holiness involves behavior roles for women. This one is where the battle rages.

We know from verses 9 and 10 that women can pray in public worship... but are they allowed to teach and exercise authority over men? Let's find out from Scripture.

1 Tim 2:11-14

It is NEVER my intent to give you the impression that there is a special priesthood of believers today who read Greek... and there is no hope for anyone who doesn't read Greek to know what the Bible is actually saying. But this is certainly a passage where a little understanding of the original language in which Paul wrote this... is an advantage. So... I want to give you an understanding of TWO words (in particular) that leads me to the position that I take on this matter of "women's role" in the church.

My position is not only shaped by my understanding of these two words that Paul employed. It also comes from the whole counsel of God's Word (what other passages say) and history. ... So let me start there... and then we will return to these verses that we just read.

God does not consider women inferior. He never treats women like second-class citizens. There were devoted women who ministered to Jesus in the days of His earthly ministry (Luke 8:1–3). ... They were present at His crucifixion and burial... and it was a woman who first heralded the glorious news of His resurrection. ... In the Book of Acts we meet Dorcas (Acts 9:36ff)... Lydia a founder of the Philippian church (Acts 16:14ff)... Priscilla (Acts 18:1–3... who... by the way... taught Apollos... getting him straightened out about Who Jesus is)... and godly women in the Berean and Thessalonian churches (Acts 17:4, 12). Paul greeted at least eight women in as he closed his letter to the Romans 16... and Phebe carried the Roman epistle to its destination. She was a deaconess in a local church (according to Rom. 16:1).

If you want to see real restrictions... rewind the clock and travel to Herod's temple in Jerusalem. Unlike Solomon's temple or the tabernacle that came before it... Herod's complex featured two exclusive zones. A first wall restricted Gentiles... allowing only Jews and Jewish converts to pass. A second wall restricted women from entering the place of worship... where only men could bring sacrifices and participate in the rites of worship.

Similarly... synagogues in the first century featured a *mechitza*... a partition separating the genders... and restricted women from participation in worship services except to observe. (These restrictions, however, did not come from Scripture. You won't find them in the Old Testament. They were introduced later.)

Christianity has always elevated the status of women – radically and very dramatically. (Please don't let anyone tell you otherwise.) Just imagine how radical this was... when Paul had earlier written...

Galatians 3:28 (ESV)

²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, **there is no male and female**, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

So the **first observation** I would like to make (before we get back to 1 Timothy 2:11-14... is this: Women played a low role in 1st Century Roman and Jewish society – but our most-radical Gospel changed all that!

Here is a **second observation** (and then we will get back...): Unity does not mean uniformity... and equal does not mean identical roles. ... (Let me repeat that)... Unity does not mean uniformity... and equal does not mean identical roles.

Many women feel that they are not considered equal as long as they are restricted from particular ministries. But please stop and consider this: The Son of God shares complete equality with the Father... yet submits to His headship. ... Meanwhile... the Father loves the Son and glorifies Him... giving Him all authority over creation. ... In that same manner... the Lord describes the distinct roles given to man and woman despite their equal value.

So let's get back to 1 Timothy now... with these two observations from the whole of Scripture in mind. ... #1. Women played a low role in 1st Century Roman and Jewish society – but the Gospel changed all that! #2. Equal does not mean identical roles.

1 Timothy 2:11-12

The first word that I want to tell you about is used twice in these two verses. It is the word “quiet.” Some translations have it as “silent” (“let the women remain silent.”)

Paul used this same word in 2 Thes 3:12 in regard to some busybodies who quit their jobs... free-loaded off of other members in the church... and used their free time during the day involving themselves in church disputes.

2 Thessalonians 3:12 (ESV)

¹² *Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.*

Paul did not tell the free-loaders in the Thessalonian church to go back to work... and work all day without making a sound. (That is not what “quiet” or “silent” means here.) He is telling them to take the right course of action (go back to work) and be peaceful about it (don’t make a big to-do... do it without showy fanfare.)

When Paul used this same word in our passage today... he is telling women to learn peaceably – without showy fanfare – completely without aggressiveness... assertiveness... or stubborn insistence on having their own way... or insisting that their own view recognized. They are to learn with an attitude of patience and not openly disputing.

What the apostle is STILL writing about... is the attitude that holiness portrays. Women are to receive teaching in an uncontentious manner... while it is being taught. (If they disagree with it, then they should discuss it with their husband first.)

How tragic that there are actually churches today who misunderstand what Paul is meaning with this word “quiet.” These churches prohibit women from even saying “hello” to anyone in the worship auditorium. They are not to open their mouths at all to utter a sound. ... [P A U S E] ...

Please look at verse 12 again with me.

1 Tim 2:12

Initially it looks like Paul is prohibiting two separate activities; women are not to teach men AND they are not to exercise authority over men. But I believe these are NOT two separate prohibitions. The wording is that the second qualifies the first. “I do not allow a woman to teach with ultimate authority over men.” The context (especially verses 14 and 15) as well as the Greek wording lead me to this conclusion.

Here is the second Greek word that helps us get at what Paul is saying. It is the Greek word that is translated into English by the phrase “*to exercise authority over.*” This word is “**αυθεντειν**” Paul wrote: “I do not allow a woman to teach as “**αυθεντειν**” over a man.

“**αυθεντειν**” means “to domineer,” “to usurp authority,” or “to be forceful.”

Here is what Paul is actually saying: “I do not allow a woman to take over and become the FINAL authoritative teacher in the church. They are to be in submission to male leadership. In other words... the office of the main teaching elder in the church is not open to women.

Can women teach men...? Yes! Can they be “**αυθεντειν**” (the final authoritative teacher of the local church)...? No!

I mentioned Priscilla a few minutes ago. She and her husband (Aquila) took Apollos aside (the eloquent preacher of the early church) and instructed him further in the doctrines of Jesus. Clearly women are allowed to teach men. Paul is not saying it is forbidden.

There are two reasons that Paul gives – for why women are not to have the role of main teacher in a church. And please notice that Paul does not take these reasons from culture. He takes them from a timeless fact of creation.

It is rooted in divine revelation... not human opinion... and in divine creation - not human culture. ... In essence (therefore) it must be preserved as having permanent and universal authority.

1 Tim 2:13-14

These verses site two reasons why women are not to hold positions as a “Senior Pastor” in a local church. The first reason is Adam was formed first and then Eve. The second reason is related to the entrance of sin. Let’s take a minute to break both of them down.

God could have created Adam and Eve at the same time - but He did not. He created Eve for Adam. She was created to be his “helper.” (LISTEN!) There can be no mistake about what Scripture is saying. **The unchanging fact... is that God desires that the order of creation be reflected in his church - the Body of Christ.** ... Firstness implies authority throughout the Scriptures. ... Being the firstborn (consistently) conveys the privilege of being heir and ruler.

The woman was created not as a competitor - but as a counterpart. ... She is just as unique a creation as the man... and her function is just as important as the man’s... but her function upon earth is not the same as man’s. ... In the plan of God’s creation... each supports... complements... and works *along the side* of the other.

The order of creation is Paul's first reason why women are not to have the final authority... when it comes to teaching in the church. Verse 14 contains the second reason.

ADAM AND EVE'S FALL OCCURRED WHEN THEY BOTH IGNORED THIS GOD-ORDAINED ORDER. Instead of following her husband... Eve chose to lead – and Adam allowed it! She had been deceived and took the deception to Adam – who saw right through it (he was not deceived) but did not take the lead that he should have taken to stop it. He allowed her to lead them into sin. She was the leader and he was the follower.

The Apostle Paul did not suggest that women are more gullible than men and thus more easily deceived. ... What Paul is saying is that Adam rejected the God-given order... he listened to his wife... disobeyed God... and brought sin and death into the world. ... Eve WAS deceived... but Adam willfully disobeyed the order God established for the husband to lead his wife.

The submission of wives to their own husbands is a part of the original Creation. The disorder we have in society today results from a violation of that God-given order. The church is to reflect this God-given order. If all is done “decently and in order” then God will bless.

In my own pastoral ministry... I have benefited greatly from the encouragement and counsel of godly women; but I have tried not to let them usurp final authority in the church. ... In fact... the godly women I have known - have no desire to “run” things in the church. ... On the other hand... we have had to correct some women who have tried to set themselves up in positions of command – above the elders.

OK... today we have worked our way through some difficult verses – a battlefield. ... But we have one more that is perhaps the most confusing...

1 Tim 2:15

How is a woman saved through childbearing? Is every mother regenerated and on her way to heaven once she has a child...? ... No! Obviously “saved” means something different here. It means the same thing here as it does (a little later) as we will see in 1 Tim chapter 4. In that verse it cannot mean “going to Heaven” either.

1 Timothy 4:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ *Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will **save** both yourself and your hearers.*

Timothy was already saved (in the sense of securing his place in Heaven.) His heart had already been regenerated. The Holy Spirit already indwelt him. And THIS kind of salvation is not earned by sticking to good teaching. (That would be a salvation by works.) No. “Salvation” in chapter 4 and in our passage here in chapter 2... means “fulfilled,” or “to find significance.” 1 Tim 4:16 therefore says: *Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will **find fulfillment** (significance) both yourself and your hearers.*

As it is used in 1 Tim 2:15... Paul had just declared that women cannot be teachers who have final authority – BUT (verse 15) you do have a role where you find fulfillment (significance.)

There is an old proverb that says: “*The hand that rocks the cradle – rules the world.*” ... [P A U S E] ...

Raising children can have a greater impact than being the final teaching authority of a local church. Godly mothers affect the future – by influencing their children and their grandchildren for Christ. They send Gospel arrows into the future that will impact upcoming societies. My mother and my grandmother never got to be senior pastors... but they are still shooting their arrows around our church today. (Pfffffffffffffft!)

It is God's will for godly women to influence mankind from the bottom up – not from the top down.

Men and women have different roles before God. Equal value? – Yes! ... Equal roles? – No!

This passage is not about male or female superiority. Any honest male knows that the grading curve was always messed up by the girls in his class. What man has not been out-thought... out-talked... and outdone by his female counterparts? ... Your experiences need be no larger than your family to know women who are superior to their fathers... brothers... and husbands.

This is not about suitability for leadership either. ... It is a statistical fact that American women read more Christian books than men and attend church in greater numbers. ... They are more relationally oriented and more naturally empathetic. ... They are more intuitive about where people are. ... They are more verbal and are natural communicators.

This is about fidelity to God's Word. ... This is about inviting God's Word to shape the life of the church... rather than the intrusive winds of culture. ... And make no mistake — if we do not let the Bible do it... **culture will!**

Paul believed... that if the church joyfully lived out the creation order in God's church... the gospel would continue to go out with power. (Do YOU believe that?) ... The impact of the church upon the world comes about... when believing men and women walk in the character and in the conduct that God has prescribed for us.