

Roles in the Family

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[0 : 0 0] All right, as we come to God's Word this morning, we're continuing on through Paul's first letter to Timothy. We've already finished chapters 1 and 4, and we've almost finished chapter 2.

Today, we'll be completing the rest of chapter 2. So if you have your Bible, you can open it up to 1 Timothy chapter 2. Here in chapter 2, Paul has been giving instructions to the church.

And he's already given specific instructions for the men, and then specific instructions for the women. And we considered those in previous weeks, but now Paul has to say more concerning the women.

And in some ways, his words apply to us men as well, as we'll see in a moment. The big question that Paul is answering in these verses is, how should men and women conduct themselves in the church in relation to each other?

How should men and women conduct themselves in the church in relation to each other? And specifically, is there a difference between the role of men and women in the church?

[1 : 3 0] Let's begin by reading the passage and hearing what Paul wrote to Timothy. 1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 11. Paul writes, Now before you run out the door, let me first state the obvious.

These are difficult words for some of us to hear. Some of you women may find these words distasteful or even offensive. And some of you men might find them embarrassing.

Why do we have this response? There are at least two reasons. One reason these words are difficult for us to hear is that when we listen to the world all around us, we hear the voice of feminism speaking loud and clear.

And what is it saying? It's saying that men and women are equal in all respects. That history has long favored men.

The voice of feminine is saying that women have been mistreated and oppressed by men. That they have been denied basic human rights.

[3 : 1 9] Such as the right to be educated, the right to vote, the right to work in certain occupations, or the right to own property. Now as we look back over human history, there is certainly some truth to these claims.

Because of sin in the human heart, men have mistreated women. Men have oppressed women. Men are still doing that today.

They use force. They use violence. They use rage and humiliation to dominate and to manipulate and to get their way.

Men are often filled with lust. And treat women as objects to satisfy their lust. And we cannot excuse these evils done by men for a moment.

So there is some truth to the cry of the feminists. Women are not second class citizens. They should be cherished and protected. Because just like us men, women are made in the image of God.

[4 : 35] What did God say? About the way he made humanity. Back in the first chapter of the Bible. It says, So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him.

Male and female, he created them. The parallelism here makes it clear. Both male and female, man and woman, are equally made in the image of God.

Equally bear the image of God. And when men treat women as less and do not respect the image of God in them, it is wrong.

So there has been some truth to the cry of the feminists over the years. But, mingled in with those cries for justice, the feminist movement has also cried out some other things as well.

They cry out that men and women are equal in every respect. That women can and should do everything that men do.

[5 : 38] And should not be relegated to any particular role in society. But should be free to participate as equals in marriage, in the home, in the workplace, in government, and in the church.

And the feminist movement has been very loud about this. And so anyone who holds to a more traditional view of marriage or family, or believes that women have been given a certain role, is shouted down as bigoted, oppressive, misogynistic, chauvinist.

And so when we come to these words of Paul, they're difficult to hear. Because for some of us, we're thinking in our minds that Paul is promoting an oppressive, misogynistic, patriarchal authority structure in the church.

But is he? Is it possible that God, our creator, really did create us, men and women, male and female, equal in his image, but quite intentionally with different roles to fulfill as men and women in the family, and in the home, and in the church?

Is it possible that that was originally part of God's good design, right from the beginning, that there be real differences in male and female, men and women, even when it comes to role?

[7 : 17] Differences which complement each other and complete humanity. At the end of the day, we have to decide who gets to define what it means to be a woman.

Is it culture? Is it culture? Society? Is it the government? Is it us? Or is it God?

Let's remember, these words are not just the Apostle Paul's, but these are the words of Jesus Christ himself speaking through Paul, speaking on behalf of God, the very words of God.

Letting culture define what it means to be a woman or a man is a recipe for disaster. Think about this.

It wasn't long ago that the feminists were fighting with all their might to have everything be the same for women as for men. But now a new movement has arisen.

[8 : 23] The transgender and LGBTQ movement has taken the spotlight. And now many feminists can be found almost saying the exact opposite of what they used to be saying.

The LGBTQ movement says that anybody can identify as a woman. And that if they do, they are one. And so should be granted all the same rights and special treatment and privileges that women have come to enjoy.

And suddenly, now we hear many feminists saying the opposite of what they were saying before. Actually, there is a difference between men and women.

And there are good reasons to keep some things separate like sports teams and change rooms. And some women are even saying, actually, it is the responsibility of the man to protect the woman since he is biologically stronger and oftentimes better suited to do so.

And actually, I do want him to open the door for me. Culture doesn't decide truth. Truth. Opinions come and go.

[9 : 38] Trends and fads rise and fall. And that's why we have to go back to the Bible. Because it's the authoritative, definitive word of truth about who we are by the God who made us and loves us.

The second reason these words might be hard to hear has to do with our fallen condition. There are quite a few places in the Bible where we see that all of us have this tendency to spurn authority of any kind.

We don't want to be subject to anything or anyone. We want to be independent. We want to do whatever we want. And this impulse to spurn authority, it wasn't there right from the beginning.

It came as a consequence of sin at the fall of man. And ever since, there's been a struggle for dominance, control, authority, and in all aspects of life.

Yes, it even affects the relationship between a husband and wife in the family. And so, when we come to passages like this, we don't like them. Because it says that men should have authority in the church.

[10 : 54] And that women are not to have that over men. And so, our fallen condition makes these words hard to hear and hard to accept. So, there's been vigorous debate over this passage on the screen, even within the Christian church.

This passage is at the heart of a great divide. And on one side of this divide is a group that call themselves complementarians. And on the other side, a group that calls themselves egalitarians.

Whole books have been written on this issue of the role of men and women, especially in the home and in the church. But the debate here is not because the passage isn't clear.

With the exception of the last verse, verse 15, which we won't really talk about this morning, the meaning of these words is quite clear. It is straightforward. But the reasons I just gave have led to all kinds of voices chiming in and muddying the waters here.

people don't like the plain meaning of this passage. And so, they're looking for a way out of its straightforward meaning. Maybe this word doesn't really mean this.

[12 : 07] Maybe that word doesn't really mean that. Maybe that's not what Paul had in mind at all. Maybe this was only for the days of Ephesus or the first century. All of this is an indication that it's not that the passage is difficult to translate or to understand.

It's that many just have difficulty accepting what it plainly says because of those two reasons I just gave. So, what is the Lord Jesus saying through Paul in this passage?

I'm just going to spell it out for us. Then we'll look at some objections and then we'll talk implications and applications for us as a church today. What Paul means to say here is that women are not to teach men or have authority over men in the church.

instead they are to submit to the leading men of the church by following their leadership and by learning from their teaching with a quiet spirit.

Let me say that again. What Paul means to say here is that women are not to teach men or have authority over men in the church.

[13 : 28] Instead they are to submit to the leading men of the church by following their leadership and by learning from their teaching with a quiet spirit. This is verses 11 and 12.

Now let's look at some of these objections. The first one some people will point out that Paul says I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority.

Could it be that this was only Paul's rule? That for some unspecified reason he was just personally disinclined to having women teach or lead men in the church.

But a careful reading of Paul's letters reveals that he uses this kind of phrasing in all of them and about all different matters. He also frequently uses the first person.

Look back up to verse 8 he said therefore I want the men everywhere to pray. This isn't just Paul's personal wish. Everything that he's desiring and directing the church to do comes through his apostolic authority from Jesus Christ himself.

[14 : 41] Another objection that some bring is that women shouldn't take authority but may be given authority.

So they will point out the language I do not permit a woman to have authority over a man and just recently there's been a shift. Let's translate that differently to assume authority over a man.

This is a highly nuanced reading. There's not a lot of examples of that way of reading it and it's probably not what Paul had in mind. This idea that as a male leader in the church I could exercise my God given authority and give a woman that same level of authority in the church.

It seems unlikely that Paul intended this or that he had this kind of an application in mind. And so probably the better translation which some have stayed true to is I do not permit a woman to have authority over a man rather than take or assume or usurp authority.

The third objection perhaps this was just for the church in Ephesus but Paul has framed all of these instructions towards men and women with a location.

[16 : 08] If we look back up to verse 8 he says therefore I want the men everywhere to pray likewise that the women should dress modestly in verse 9 and then as it just flows right down into this instruction in verse 11 the woman should learn in quietness in full submission.

So the flow the context suggests that this instruction is not just for Ephesus but for all the churches everywhere. And the final objection that we'll look at this morning of course there's many more this I would say is probably the most important one this is the most common one that this only applied to the church in the first century.

Perhaps this was only for churches in the first century because of the generally accepted societal norms for women back then. They had a certain view of women back then and Paul wanted them to do right by the culture of the day in their churches.

And so they'll say things like just like Paul didn't promote the abolition of slavery so neither did he promote the emancipation of women. Well that's a logical argument that's a cohesive argument and it feels like it's going to get us where we are in our culture today but there's one massive glaring problem with it.

Look at the reason that Paul gives for why these gender roles should be maintained in the church. A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

[17 : 47] I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man. She must be quiet for or because Adam was formed first then Eve.

The reason it should be this way says Paul goes all the way back to creation. It's not a thing driven by the culture of the day. It's a thing rooted in how God originally made and ordered things at the very beginning.

Adam was formed first and then Eve. So Paul is saying that we should do it like this in the church because that reflects what God originally designed even before sin entered the world when everything was good, when everything was perfect.

God was in other words, male authority in the church didn't come about because of sin or because of the corruption of humanity.

It was part of the good, beautiful design and intention of God right from the start. Now, there's a whole context to this that comes from other passages in the Bible which we have to consider at the same time.

[19 : 06] From ancient times until this time when the New Testament was written, there was this general understanding that this is the way it should be in the family and in marriage. We see it in Genesis chapter 2 verse 18.

Before sin entered the world, God said, it's not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. Already, we're seeing the role of women in relation to men.

being defined. She was not created to be an independent head of her own household, but in the context of the first family, she would be a helper to him, which implies that his leadership would set the family direction.

Then not long after, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden, who did God call out to first and hold ultimately responsible? It was Adam, the man.

All through the Old Testament, while there are the effects of sin on this relationship between men and women, I mean, for example, Abraham was guilty of throwing his wife under the bus in his sojournings through foreign territory, treated her despicably, yet there is still this general understanding that this is how God made it to be.

[20 : 26] The man is the head of the household and the family, and the wife is under his authority. The genealogies in the Bible are all traced primarily through the men.

Children with similar names were differentiated by the names of their fathers. God assigned inheritances in the promised land to Jacob's sons, and inheritances were generally passed down from fathers to sons.

And again, this doesn't mean that women are any less important to God. It simply reflects that God assigned a different role to men and women when it comes to the family.

Now, if all this was only intended for the people of Israel, it would surely have been stated in New Testament times when God opened his way of salvation to all people that it's now changing.

And yet we read Jesus speaking through his apostles and saying things like this. 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 1 to 7 to 6.

[21 : 37] Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands, so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry, or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. God's love. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord.

You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. So even though Abraham mistreated Sarah on at least two occasions and failed to, and Abraham failed to trust God to protect her, Sarah is commended for obeying him, and obeying implies authority.

The word submit and submission imply authority, headship. Peter in the first century is saying, yes, that's the way for wives today that is good and right.

[23 : 01] Sarah is an example of that. Faith-filled submission to husbands, a submissive spirit that recognizes that your husband is the one that God has put in charge.

Notice also though that this instruction comes with a very serious warning to husbands. Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner, and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

So men don't get a free pass. They ought to treat their wives with respect, says Peter. They ought never to use their strength to dominate. They are to recognize that women, their wives, are equally heirs of the gracious gift of life that comes through Christ Jesus.

In Ephesians chapter 5, Paul says, do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. And then he lists off a whole bunch of things that the Spirit will lead us to do when we are filled with the Spirit.

Things like speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing and making music from our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father for everything, and verse 21, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[24 : 31] Wives to husbands, a little further down, children to their parents, a little further down, slaves to their masters. But let's look at these instructions that Paul gives to the wives specifically.

He says, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands. in everything. Now there are equally serious instructions given to the husbands as well about how they must love their wives in this passage, just as Jesus Christ loved the church.

With a self-sacrificing love, seeking her benefit, but it's difficult to get around these words and the clear meaning of them. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.

So this is an important context to Paul's instruction about women in 1 Timothy. God has designed and intended from creation that this is how a family should be.

[25 : 56] Men and women are created equally in the image of God. they're granted an equal inheritance in salvation, but they have been given different roles to play in the family.

And this is good. Everything God made is good, said Paul in 1 Timothy chapter 4. God's intention was that the husband would bear the burden of leadership for his wife and children.

And it wasn't supposed to be a sinful, selfish domineering of his wife, but a humble, self-sacrificing, serving, kind, respectful, considerate, loving kind of leadership.

The kind of leadership that it would be a joy to submit to and follow. According to Paul here in the rest of this passage in Ephesians, husband and wife in their unique God-given roles are meant to picture and point to the wonderful love of Jesus for his bride, his church, and her joyful submission to him in all things.

That's one of the ways God intended for marriage and family to bring glory to God. I mean, think about Jesus and his relationship with his church. How did he treat his disciples?

[27 : 22] Did he say, get down there and wash my feet? No. He washed their feet. He served them. He gave his life for them. And so this is the pattern that we are to follow in the church and in the home.

Now, it doesn't mean we won't fail and struggle to live this, or that sin won't cause problems, but this is how Christ wants us to live when it comes to the family. And now here in 1 Timothy 2, verse 11 to 15, Paul's basically saying the will of Christ is the same in the church.

The church is to be done like the family. Just as the man is the head of the wife in the home, so he must also have the authority and take the lead in the church.

And the women must submit to that leadership. Remember Paul's stated purpose for writing this letter. 1 Timothy 3, verse 14 and 15.

I'm writing you these instructions so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God. We are to operate just like a family, family, which means that the men who lead might be thought of as the spiritual dads in the family.

[28 : 43] And there's a wonderful safeguard here because not just any man is permitted to teach and to have authority in the church. As we'll see next week, Paul gives specific requirements for men to lead in the church, to have authority.

And most of them are character kinds of things. Christ-like character, and that will protect the people in the church from being governed by those who are domineering or abusive.

How do we apply all this? How should the rubber hit the road with this in our church? First of all, is Paul saying that women should be silent in the church?

Some of your translations will have the word silent. There are a few scholars that think that that's what it means, but they would never say in the whole gathering of the church, women can't even open their mouths.

They really will mostly always say that it's during the regular teaching moments of the church, like during the sermon. The majority of interpreters, however, take the word silence to refer to the spirit of their participation because it also is used that way as well, quietness.

[29 : 57] And I think that's what makes the most sense here. just look back up the page to verse 2. We're to pray for kings and all those in authority that we may live peaceful and quiet lives.

That's the same word. In all godliness and holiness. It doesn't mean silent lives. It means quiet, in tone, respectful, gentle, as opposed to loud, interrupting, obnoxious, arrogant.

And there's a few other usages, just like this, where it doesn't mean silent, but it refers to the spirit. The spirit of the learning for the women is to be a quiet one.

Perhaps there were some very loud, outspoken, interrupting women of social standing in the church at Ephesus who were seeking to take charge and have their way.

So how does this apply practically? I'm just going to do this in kind of question and answer format. Should women participate in the discussion in adult Sunday school?

[31 : 01] Yes. Participating in the discussion, sharing your thoughts, your observations, your insight, that's different than teaching the class. It's about the spirit of how we participate.

Do you come to the class to learn? to respond to the word of God? Or do you come to teach and to help others come to the same conclusion that you have, the way that you think is the right way to live?

So women, absolutely. Participate in the discussion, but teaching the class and giving leadership to the class should be for those qualified men.

Should women participate in the discussion at congregational meetings? Yes. In fact, good leadership always seeks feedback from those who are following. To make the best decisions, we need to know what the needs are.

We need to know how people are doing, what the situation is. Good leadership gathers counsel and wisdom. And so dialogue and discussion between a husband and wife, between an elder and a church member is good.

[32 : 09] It's healthy. But the tone of that and the spirit of that dialogue should be respectful of the God-ordained differences in role. Should women be pastors in the church?

Well, it depends what you mean by pastor. But if by pastor you mean one of the leading elders who preaches and teaches the whole congregation, then no. No. This word from Christ through Paul implies no.

But, God has given some women the spiritual gift of shepherding for the building up of the church. And should that be used in the church?

I say yes. But these instructions given to Timothy would limit the use of that gift to women and children. Should women be elders in the church?

According to this passage, no. As we'll see next week, elders are tasked with authoritative oversight and leadership of the church.

[33 : 16] Not only that, but to be an elder, Paul says in the next chapter, that you must be able to teach. And in the context of this letter, that's teach the truths of the faith, the word of God to the church.

That's one of the primary responsibilities of an elder. And so women cannot be elders in the church because that would put them in a position of authority over men and give them the role of teaching men, which goes completely against what Paul is saying here in these verses.

But, let's also remember the context of this letter. This letter is about how we should conduct ourselves in the household of God, in the church. And, as I just mentioned, in the context, the teaching refers specifically to the doctrines of the church, the truths of the faith, the word of God, how to live in response to God's word.

So, can we have Sherry, our public health nurse, she's shaking her head, teach a one-day course on CPR on a Saturday morning? Yes. There's no problem with that.

Can we have a sister in Christ come up here to the front and share personal testimony? Absolutely. That's the story of what Christ has done in her life. That's not teaching the church like the elders are tasked with doing.

[34 : 33] Furthermore, many women have been gifted by God to teach. And these gifts should be used in the church for the building up of the other women and the children.

In fact, when we get to Paul's letter to Titus, we're going to see him command it. Older women, teach the younger women. So, women can lead, they can teach women's groups, women's Bible studies, women's Sunday school classes, alive.

If you're a woman and you have the gift to teach, do not bury it in the sand. It is to be used. Just not to teach the men. Should women be on the board of our church?

According to our current church constitution, we're to have a board and the board shall be the business administrators of the church and the board is to be made up of the pastor, elders, church clerk, and church treasurer.

Now, we've already said that women should not be pastors or elders, but can they be the church clerk or the church treasurer? However, the problem with this is that if we elect women to these roles, it puts them functionally in the authoritative decision making seats around the table for the whole church.

[35 : 48] They would then come to the monthly meetings. They would not only participate in the discussion with the elders and pastor, but also vote on motions. Whether it was intended or not, having a woman in these positions puts them in a position of authority over men in the church.

This is why we haven't nominated women to these positions in the past six years. Furthermore, next week, as we move into chapter three, we're going to see that church governance by a board is not biblical anyway.

We're to be governed by a council of elders, a plurality of elders. And so we actually have some major work to do right here in our own church on how we are organized on our constitution.

constitution because our governance is modeled more after a secular organization way of operating than the Bible. And if the word of God gives us a pattern to follow for church governance and we find ourselves at a step with it, we got to get in step with it.

We need to change. Should women be deacons or ministry coordinators in the church? We're going to dig into this a little more in the weeks ahead. Paul talks about deacons in chapter three.

[37 : 01] But for today, when it comes to leadership in the church, there's a difference between having authority and oversight in the church like the elders are supposed to and coordinating a mixed group of volunteers in set up for a potluck or in a renovation project or in an outreach event or a financial review committee.

I sometimes laugh at how legalistic people can be about this. I've heard people tell me, a woman shouldn't lead the budget committee. That's big decision making and should only be done by the elders.

But then you ask that person, so how do you manage your finances at home? Oh, my wife looks after all that stuff. Okay. So she can be trusted with the family finances but not the church family's finances?

How does that work? I say go read Proverbs 31 and look at all that the wife of noble character has been entrusted with in the family and in the home and then let's talk about whether women can be ministry coordinators or deacons or treasurers or whatever.

Now, women, I know the tendency is to hear in all this a list of don'ts. But I want to encourage you. God did not give these instructions to take something away from you that's rightfully yours.

[38 : 24] The different roles he has given us really are good. And so I would encourage you to see this not as a list of don'ts but as a list of don't have tos. A list of things you don't need to worry about.

A list of things where God himself blesses you to say that's not my job. This is where all of you women get to breathe a sigh of relief. You're off the hook.

You're free of the responsibility of church leadership. And it is a heavy responsibility. Those who lead in the church and teach the congregation will have to answer to God for everything that they decide and what they have taught.

And truth be told, sometimes we men who have been saddled with that burden wish we could sometimes just be followers followers and just have someone else lead the way and submit to that person.

So women, you are off the hook. But men, you are on the hook. This serious responsibility of teaching in the church and having authority in the church falls to you.

[39 : 40] Which means that you men must strive to be men of character. You must strive to live exemplary lives worth following. You must strive to learn the truths of the faith because it falls to you, this burden.

This sacred responsibility. That's why we started doing LEAD twice a month. Because we cannot neglect this. In the absence of good male leadership in the church, the family falls apart.

It scatters. In the absence of good, solid biblical teaching, the health and the life of the church slips away. Men, women have been given the instruction in God's word to submit to our leadership and teaching.

And so we better be the kind of leaders and teachers that make it a joy for them to follow. May the Lord not find us men sleeping at the wheel or checked out and living for our own comforts and pleasures abdicating our responsibility.

So yes, there is a difference between the role of men and women in the church. It's rooted in creation. It's good.

[40 : 57] And when we live out our God-ordained roles as men and women in the home and in the church, it brings glory to God and it adorns the gospel. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, I pray that you would help us with these challenging words. We see many Christians and churches adrift.

They're not tethered to your word anymore. And we so want to be faithful. I pray that you would give us the courage and the wisdom to know how to live in response to these words.

I pray that you would give us the humility and the graciousness towards one another. And I pray that Jesus Christ really would be exalted and glorified through this.

Though we may not understand or see how today, but we trust at the end of the story, we will. To your name be the glory. Amen.