

## **Relationship – Men, Women and God**

### **Relationship in Marriage**

When one studies Ephesians chapter 5, verses 22 to 33 it is clear that marriage is of God and it is good and it is also a mystery to much of the world. God gave marriage its meaning at the beginning of creation, but its full meaning was not completely revealed for a long time. Its meaning is made plain in the New Testament and in who Christ is. **The New Testament, for Christians, brought into clarity that marriage is an image or picture of Christ's relationship to His bride the church.** God meant for a husband and a wife to be living images of Christ and His church in relationship to each other. As Paul wrote, “**Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,** <sup>26</sup> **that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,** <sup>27</sup> **so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”** (Ephesians 5:25-27) The husband is to be a sacrificial spiritual leader washing his wife and children with the Word of God.

### **Relationship Before Sin**

So when God created man and woman, He made us the way we are, specifically designed with His plan for the coming Christ and His church. God intentionally made us with the differences of manhood and womanhood. God did this so that we would be suited for these complementary roles both within marriage and as Christians outside of marriage in community of His Church. In this marriage relationship man was meant to perform the role of Christ, and the woman was meant to perform the role of His bride, the church.

These differences of manhood and womanhood are not the result of sin, but were designed by God and existed before sin. Let me be clear, sin did not create manhood and womanhood. God did. Sin did not bring diversified, complementary roles into existence. God did. Before sin ever entered the world, God ordained and designed Adam to be a loving, caring, strong leader for his wife Eve. Before sin entered the world, God ordained and designed Eve to be a partner who supports and honors that leadership. Both men and women are the living the image of God. Both are equal in their God-like personhood. But, God made us different in our manhood and womanhood. God's pattern for the life of men and women and especially marriage is beautiful. **When God's pattern for manhood and womanhood are lived out, each respects the other, serves the other, complements each other and they enjoy each other.**

### **Relationship Restored by Christ**

Sin destroyed the harmony of the relationship between men and women and their relationship with God. Sin caused men to abandon servant-leadership and become passive or harsh, insensitive and uncaring, or some other distortion of biblical headship. Sin distorted the woman's support and honor into manipulation or defiance or helplessness or some other distortion of true biblical submission.

So what Paul did in Ephesians 5 is call for a recovery of God's original plan for marriage. Paul is not calling for the abolishment or for changing the marriage relationship that God created at the beginning. He wants to get back to what God designed from the beginning. Paul is advocating true biblical headship and true biblical submission. Here is how I am defining these two roles to bring them into clarity. First, "Headship" is the divine calling of a husband to take primary responsibility for Christ-like servant leadership, protection, and provision for his

wife, family and in the church. Secondly, “Submission” is the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it out as she lives according to her gifts.

When a husband leads like Christ and a wife responds like the bride of Christ, there is harmony and mutuality that is more beautiful and more satisfying and more fruitful than any pattern of marriage created by man. God loves His people and He loves His glory. Therefore, when we follow God’s design of manhood, womanhood and marriage, we are most satisfied and He is most glorified.

### **Relationship: Men, Women, Church and God**

Now the first real test is, I think, do we grasped the biblical essence of manhood and womanhood and affirm it as true and beautiful. The second test is whether Paul's applications of gender roles in the life of the church makes sense to us and are we are able to embrace them. If the New Testament roles for the man and woman in marriage are rooted not in sinful pride and not in cultural expectations, but in God's original design for creation, then how would you expect this original design to express itself in the life of the church? That is what we have before us today in Paul’s letter to Timothy found in chapter 2, verses 8 to 15 and especially in verses 11 and 12.

My beloved let’s examine these verses that have become difficult for the American church and in our culture. Now sit back and buckle up for the next few minutes as I work to explain this passage. When we finish we will know if the story these verses tell is really as unattractive as the world would like us to think and what they mean for us, as Christians.

Reading beginning with verse 11, “[Let a woman learn quietly with all](#)

submissiveness. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve; <sup>14</sup> and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. <sup>15</sup> Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.”

The first thing, I think we need to do in order to understand the submissiveness in this text is carefully examine the meaning of “quiet.” Paul says, “Let a woman learn quietly.” After we explore quiet we will need to understand the meaning of “teach.” Paul continues in verse 12, “I do not permit a woman to teach.” Finally, what does Paul mean by a woman is not permitted “to exercise authority over a man.” Let's take these one at time.

### **Relationship: Quiet**

First, look at verse 11, “Let a woman learn quietly.” I am using the English Standard Version translation other translations use the word "silence." Notice that the word "quietly or silence" is used also in verse 12.

The word for quiet or silence here is “*hesuchia*” (hay·soo·**khee**·ah). It is used earlier in verse 2 of this chapter. “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings ... that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” Here in verse 2 it refers to the "quiet" life, which all godly people should lead. This gives you the tone and the extent of the word. It does not refer to absolute silence or complete quietness. A peaceable life is not a life of total silence. It is a life untroubled and serene and content and at peace. So the quiet or silence does not imply total or complete quiet. It is more like what we would call a state "quietness" where one is focused on God and His Word, not themselves and the world around them.

You can see this more clearly at the end of verse 12. The same word is used again. But this time you can tell what Paul has in mind for the word “quiet” by its opposite. He says, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.” Bringing it down to a tighter view, “women are not to have authority over men, but to be quiet.” In other words this quietness is the opposite of exercising authority over men. “Don't exercise authority over men, instead be quiet.”

So what sort of quietness does Paul have in mind? It is the kind of quietness that respects and honors the leadership of the men God has called to oversee the church. Verse 11 says that the quietness is in “all submissiveness.” Then in verse 12 it says the quietness is the opposite of “authority over men.” So the point is not whether a woman says nothing, but whether she is submissive and whether she supports the authority of the men God has called to oversee the church. Quietness means not speaking in a way that compromises that authority.

We will tackle what Paul means by submission in a just short while.

### **Relationship: Teaching**

The second thing we need to look at is the reference to teaching in verse 12. How wide-ranging is Paul's prohibition when he says, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man?”

To answer this, one thing we can do is look at other places where Paul and others talk about women teaching. For example in his letter to Titus, Paul wrote, “Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good,<sup>4</sup> and so train the young women to love their husbands and children,<sup>5</sup> to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their

own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.” (Titus 2:3-5)

Another example is found in 2 Timothy where Paul reminds Timothy, “continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.” (2 Timothy 3:14) We know whom Paul is referring by an earlier verse, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” (2 Timothy 1:5) We also know from the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts that Timothy’s father was not a believer nor was he a Jew, so there was no proper male spiritual headship in his family.

One other example is Priscilla. It says in Acts, “Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. *Remember at this time the Scriptures is the Old Testament.* <sup>25</sup> He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. <sup>26</sup> He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” (Acts 18:24-26) Here we see Apollos was a Jew who knew the Old Testament scriptures. He had also been taught in the way of Christ through the testimony of John the Baptist. At this point the church had not been formerly established and Christians were still meeting in the synagogue. It would have been both culturally and scripturally inappropriate for Apollos to be taught by Priscilla alone, but with her husband Aquila they were able to teach Apollos a more complete understanding of the teachings of Christ.

So, it is not likely that Paul is saying in 1 Timothy 2:12 that every kind of teaching is forbidden to women. There are examples of them teaching younger women, teaching children, and in some manner teaming up with their husbands to give private

instruction when someone is confused or uninformed like Apollos. Those are just some examples. Is it possible to generalize, then, about what Paul does have in mind here when he says, “I do not permit a woman to teach”? I think the safest thing to do is let the next phrase help guide us. The next phrase is, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over men.”

Instead of letting the word “teach” mean anything we want it to mean or think it might mean, it is safer to say, it appears to mean a kind of teaching that relates to authority. Teaching and exercising authority go together. So at least one general thing we can say is that **Paul forbids women teaching when it is part of the exercise of authority over men.**

That leads us to the third question, namely, what is this “authority” referred to in verse 12?

### **Relationship: Authority**

The key that unlocks this door of understanding is a very interesting observation of the whole of Paul’s letter. When you read the rest of 1st Timothy about the role of elders in the church, what you find is that the elders had two basic responsibilities. They are to govern and they are to teach. You can see this in the qualifications of elders in chapter 3, verses 1–7. In addition in 5:17 we read, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”

We understand that elders rule or govern, and elders teach or preach. Back in Acts chapter 20, you may recall, the elders in the church at Ephesus were called by the Holy Spirit and made "overseers" and charged with "pasturing" or feeding the flock, that is, teaching the whole counsel of God.

I do not think it is coincidental that Paul says in verse 12 that he does not permit a woman to teach and exercise authority over men. He is saying in essence, I do not permit women to fill the office of elder in the church. The elders are charged with the leadership, instruction and spiritual oversight and health of the church. So when Paul puts those two things together and says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority," the most natural sense in the context of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy is, "I do not permit a woman to assume the office of elder in the church."

So the authority Paul has in mind in our passage this morning is the authority of elders. We can now ask, what is that supposed to look like? Well we already observed what this means from the words of Jesus recorded in Mark, **"Whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** (Mark 10:43-45) Elders are servants of Christ and are His under-shepherds. Elders model their leadership after that of Christ; they are servant-leaders. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:8 and 13:10 that God gave him authority in the church to build up and not to tear down. Peter wrote elders were not to be, **"domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."** (1 Peter 5:3) Elders serve the congregation by teaching the whole counsel of God the Father and Christ the Son found in the Scriptures.

In other words, elder-authority is servant-authority. Elder-leadership is servant-leadership. That is why teaching is at the heart of this calling. Elder-authority leads by persuasion, by teaching and not by coercion or political maneuvering. Elder-authority is always subordinate to biblical texts. An elder's teaching and behavior can always be called to account by Scripture. Therefore teaching is the primary instrument of leadership in the church.

## **Relationship: Authority and Submission**

I think it would be helpful to step back here and try to do for the concepts of authority and submission in the church what we did for the concepts of headship and submission in the home, namely, give a clear definition of each.

"Authority" refers to the **divine** calling of spiritually gifted men to take primary responsibility as elders for Christ-like servant-leadership and teaching in the church.

"Submission" refers to the divine calling of the rest of the church, both men and women, to honor and affirm the leadership of the elders and to be equipped by the elder teaching for the hundreds of various ministries available to men and women in the service of Christ.

This point is very important. For men and women who have a heart to minister, to save souls and heal broken lives and resist evil and meet needs, there are fields of opportunity that are simply endless. God intends for the entire church to be mobilized in ministry, both male and female. Nobody is to be at home watching TV or be on Play Station or X-box while the world burns in sin. God intends to equip and mobilize the saints through a company of spiritual men who take primary responsibility for leadership and teaching in the church. Men, my brothers, let me ask, how are we doing? How are each of us serving and how are we serving together?

## **CLOSING**

There are many voices today who claim to know a better way to equip and mobilize the men and women of the church for ministry. However, my brothers and sisters, I commend to you this morning with all my heart the plain meaning of these verses. First, **manhood and womanhood mesh better in ministry when men take primary**

responsibility for leadership and teaching in the church. Second, that manhood and womanhood are better preserved and better nurtured and more fulfilled and more fruitful in this church order than in any other order.

I commend this to you for your belief and for your behavior, because this is the way the Scriptures teach us to order the church. God inspired the scriptures, they belong to Him and they are for our benefit, but they are not of man. I believe God is good and He is good all the time. Live in His goodness enjoy His order.

My hope next Lord's Day is to finish chapter 2 of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy exploring verses 13 and 15. I will attempt to paint the big picture of what it means to be a man and woman in all of life when you belong to Christ.