

The sermon

READ PASSAGE

Body

Intro

Let me share some personal background. The church I got saved in belonged to a denomination that ordained women as Senior Pastors. The first church I was a member of, their Assistant Pastor was a woman. She preached every Sunday night.

Because of the lack of Bible teaching in that church (and the female pastor had better Bible content than the male Senior Pastor), a friend guided me to another church where only men preached and the elders were all male.

I read through the whole Bible in my first year as a Christian, but didn't wrestle with 1 Timothy 2:12 until seminary. Seminary professors in unity taught only male elders and preachers. So I'm forced to make a decision: who's right?

My point in sharing this is that the issue isn't your church background or whether there was a woman preacher you liked. The issue is always what does the Bible say? What the world thinks, my personal experience, how other Christians behave, my own logic. These aren't a perfect guide. The Bible is.

Point 1: Men, refrain from wrath and quarrelling when praying (2:8)

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; – 2:8

“in every place” = in every place where the church gathers, whether Ephesus, Corinth, or anywhere else.

The setting here is the public worship service of the local church. The Sunday morning service. Paul's concerned about what happens when the church gathers: prayer, dress, teaching, authority.

Imagine Darryl's angry about the results of a recent finance meeting. His proposal got voted down. So he's angry and uses his Sunday morning prayer to vent his wrath and argue why everyone else was wrong. That's not why we pray during the service.

Paul just said pray for governing authorities so *“that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way”* (2:2). But the men were using prayer to create disruption.

Yes, this sounds ridiculous. But it appears Paul's correcting a problem. False teachers were breeding division by deviating from the apostles' doctrine. Prayer became a voice for debate.

Application

The issue's how we pray. When Darryl prays during the worship service, what should his heart attitude be? Peace, love, joy, unity. Not anger and debate.

Point 2: Women, refrain from showing off skin and wealth when the church gathers (2:9-10)

likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness- with good works. – 2:9-10

If you're wondering how to be a godly woman, this is one of your go-to passages.

This morning we probably have women with braids, gold, and pearls. My five year old has braids sometimes. Are we ignoring Scripture?

It's good to ask questions. It's good to be Bereans (Acts 17:11).

"likewise" = like prayer *"in every place"* requires a right attitude, women should dress in a certain way.

"should adorn themselves"

To adorn means to decorate with. Women should decorate themselves with good works. Be known for godliness not wealth, etc. What do I want to be known for?

"respectable apparel"

Respectable apparel is commended. This means that some outfits women wear are respectable. Other outfits are not. Sisters, one critical question you should ask is, is my clothing respectable in God's eyes? The issue isn't what's the style today? Not even how do other Christian women dress? The issue is what sort of dress conforms to God's word? God calls his people to live distinct, holy (separated) lives. Women, attire is one way you'll distinguish yourselves from the world.

"respectable" means appropriate, honorable, proper. Respectable is described as *"with modesty and self-control."* *"modesty"* is very similar to *"respectable."* Think decent, reverent attire. *"self-control"* meaning practicing sound judgment, living sensibly.

Inappropriate, dishonorable attire indicates too much skin.

contrast

Paul contrasts *"respectable apparel"* with *"braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire."* It's clear expensive clothing is a problem: gold, pearls, costly attire. But what about braids?

Studies of Ephesus in the 1st century suggest another problem: it's possible the clothing forbidden was the attire of prostitutes. Paul didn't want Christian women showing up at the Sunday morning service wearing what prostitutes wear. That's not good for gospel witness.

Regardless, two problems are clear from Paul's words:

- 1) The flaunting of wealth.
- 2) Clothing that wasn't respectable.

Women were showing up at the Sunday morning service and drawing attention to their bodies and their wealth. They placed their identity in physical beauty and possessions rather than Christ. They communicated to others my value is found in my body and my possessions.

They communicated to the common women, "look at me, don't you wish you had what I have. I'm better than you." They communicated to the men, "I look really good. You should lust after me."

They took people's eyes off God. They made the poor feel less important. They tempted men to lust. Not what you want on Sunday morning.

Interpretation

So what about the braids? I would argue the universal principles are:

- 1) Don't find your worth in your wealth.
- 2) Don't flaunt your wealth during worship services.
- 3) Don't find your worth in your physical appearance.

4) Don't flaunt your body during worship services.

These principles apply in all places and all times. Maybe braids was flaunting wealth? Maybe braids was dressing like a prostitute? In our culture braids are not equated with wealth or prostitution. So braids aren't an issue in Palermo.

Am I inconsistent?

The pastor's okay with braids but not okay with female pastors and preachers. He picks and chooses what to obey. If he's okay with braids he should be okay with female preachers. I get your confusion.

My response is I uphold the underlying principles of both. **Principle 1:** women shouldn't flaunt wealth and dress seductively in worship services. In different cultures, having braids might not flaunt wealth or indicate seductive dress.

Principle 2: women shouldn't teach men or exercise authority over men. This application doesn't vary from culture to culture. Authority is always exercised in the elder office. There's no other way to obey 2:12 except limiting elders to men.

Paul's principles can be kept if we allow braids. Paul's principles cannot be kept if we allow women elders.

Application

Women, the clothes you wear is a heart response to God. God says don't find your worth in your things or your beauty. Love your brothers in Christ. Don't dress in a way that would cause them to stumble. Find your identity in the gospel: adopted child of God, born again, new creation, justified, reconciled, saved, etc.

The Bible doesn't provide a comprehensive list of forbidden clothing items or approved clothing items. The Bible says learn God's will, seek to honor him in all things, keep a clear conscience. No comprehensive list means we need to open our Bibles, meditate on principles, and prayerfully seek God's wisdom to obey these truths. By not providing a list, God forces us to turn to him for guidance in these matters.

What about good works women should be clothed with? 5:10 speaks of the good works of qualified widows:

and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. – 1 Timothy 5:10

Point 3: Women (and men), learn the Scriptures by embracing male teachers and leaders (2:11-14)

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. – 2:11

quietly

It's possible it's literal silence. The pastor's preaching on Sunday morning and women were drowning him out with their words. It's possible that "quietly" means without causing a commotion, without disturbing the sermon.

"with all submissiveness" indicates a lack of submissiveness. Failure to receive teachers and their leadership.

learn

Here's a basic truth. Women should be learners. Same for men. As Christians it's our duty to receive Bible teaching. To come on Sunday morning so we can understand God's word, love God's word, and practice God's word. Christians are supposed to be learners!

I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. – 2:12

It means what it says.

Paul's interest is what happens during worship services. The command bars women from two distinct actions:

- 1) Teaching a man.
- 2) Exercising authority over a man.

2:11 corresponds to 2:12.

- 1) "*learn quietly*" corresponds to "*I do not permit a woman to teach...a man.*"
- 2) "*with all submissiveness*" corresponds to "*I do not permit a woman...to exercise authority over a man.*"

Learning is fitting. Teaching is not. Submissiveness is fitting. Exercising authority is not.

Why does Paul think this way?

***For Adam was formed first, then Eve;* – 2:13**

"*For*" indicates an explanation. Paul believes he's justified in restricting women because Adam was created before Eve. Order of creation is relevant to male and female roles in the church today.

Male and female roles are grounded in creation. They aren't situational. They don't change from culture to culture. This was God's design from the beginning.

***and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.* – 2:14**

"*and*" indicates Paul's continuing his explanation. Eve's role in the fall justifies Paul's limits on women's ministry. Note Paul grounds his command in creation and fall, not special, unique circumstances in Ephesus. There's endless variations today that explain away these commands. Women were uneducated or teaching heresy or assuming leadership without authorization. Note these aren't the reasons Paul provides.

So what's meant by Eve's deception? It could mean women and men are created with different strengths and weaknesses. Like men are more prone to lust, women are more prone to deception. It's not saying women are dumber than men and more likely to sin.

Another option is the fall reveals a reversal of roles established at creation. Adam was supposed to lead and Eve was to be his helper. In the fall, roles were reversed. Eve took the lead. Adam followed. Sin ensued.

So the fall illustrates what happens when male-female roles are reversed and mankind deviates from God's design. Paul's saying I'm sticking with God's design of male leadership.

What does this mean for local churches?

At the very least, women aren't allowed to preach sermons to the congregation and serve as elders. Note that teaching itself is act of exercising authority. When I teach on Sunday morning I'm not telling you what car you need to buy, but I am telling men not to pray with anger. Bible teaching is exercising authority.

Carrying over the principle from the largest gathering to smaller gatherings, the teaching prohibition carries over into Sunday school classes and small group settings. For this reason, women aren't teaching Sunday school classes or leading small groups where men are present.

More could be said I know.

What about when men don't step up?

Time to pray. Not time to disobey.

Author and pastor's wife, Gloria Furman says:

“Jesus will build his church, and he will supply elders and pastors to lead local congregations, so women never need to fear that they must be pressed into an authoritative role in the church against their conscience, which is bound by Scripture.” – *Women in the Church*, 3rd Edition, 319

Does this mean women are inferior?

Men and women are equal in dignity and value. And designed for different roles. Both are equally created in the image of God. Women aren't 75% and men 100%. Some women are gifted to teach and know their Bibles better than men.

What place do women have in the church?

There are many avenues for women to serve in the church and advance the gospel:

- 1) Nurturing children in God's word and modeling godliness to them.

The greatest means of evangelism and discipleship in the church! Perhaps the greatest stewardship in the church (outside stewardship of the gospel)! The health of local churches is shaped by Christian mothers!

- 2) Advising and encouraging their husband.
- 3) Serving in homeschool co-op where they can disciple and evangelize.
- 4) Hospitality to non-Christians.
- 5) Hospitality to Christians.
- 6) Evangelism wherever (neighbors, co-workers, etc.).
- 7) Deaconess-like service.

Decorations, communion set-up, fellowship events, painting, Angel Tree, etc.

- 8) Teaching children's Sunday school.
- 9) Discipling women one-on-one.
- 10) Informally counseling women.
- 11) Formally counseling women.
- 12) Leading a woman's small group or Sunday school class.

Women should be theologians who can teach verse by verse and offer sound counsel and evangelize. There's a place for women who are excited about the Bible and want to teach others.

Application: authority and submission

Submitting to authority is basic to the human condition. We all submit to God. We all submit to governing authorities instituted by God (e.g., police).

Ironically, while being a metals inspector, I was the head of my home. But I went to work and submitted to the orders of my supervisors while my wife stayed home with our children and arranged her day however she saw fit. I followed orders all day. She gave orders all day. Submission isn't unique to women. Men submit to authority too.

Application: the fight for faith

God's design is always good! Everything God says helps us flourish if we obey him. The culture says God's restrictive and unfair and unwise. Our response to 1 Timothy 2:12 reveals whose word we trust.

Our churches will be better or worse depending on our submission to his design. Do you believe this! Do you believe it's better to do things God's way rather than the world's way? 1 Timothy 2:12 tests us here.

Point 4: Women, continue in your nurturing role by faith (2:15)

Yet she will be saved through childbearing- if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. – 2:15

Is this confusing?

1. Some liberal scholars take it as works salvation. Women go to heaven by bearing children.

What? Young girls can't be saved until they're old enough to give birth? Women who never conceive can't be saved?

Elsewhere Paul says:

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. – **Romans 3:28**

He doesn't mean women are forgiven of sins by giving birth.

2. Another suggestion is "*childbearing*" refers to Jesus.

She will be saved by the birth of a particular child. This seems unlikely because we're saved by Jesus' death on the cross, not by his being born.

So what does it mean? Final salvation (glorification) will come to women who embrace their God-ordained role and persevere in the faith.

Interpretation

The "*she*" is Eve.

Eve's salvation is conditional ("*if*") upon continuing in the faith.

"if they continue in the faith" expands it beyond Eve = all women including the "she" who should be submissive.

"she will be saved...if they continue in faith" = indicates future salvation (= glorification = redemption of the body) upon the condition of continuing in the faith. It doesn't mean past forgiveness of sins. She already has faith because she needs to continue in that faith.

So she must continue in the faith to experience future salvation. Her primary way of continuing is fulfilling her domestic role (childbearing). If she doesn't continue in the faith, she will show herself to have never been saved to begin with. She won't be glorified at Christ's return.

The Bible teaches we must continue to inherit the promises. The Bible teaches all true believers continue in the faith. We must conclude those who fail to continue were never saved to begin with.

Christian, have confidence in God's keeping power! If you presently believe you're born again. God will strengthen your faith (1 Pet 1:5) and you won't fall away because God will complete the work he began in you (Phil 1:6).

Basically, it's a call to ongoing faithfulness in carrying out God's design for her as a woman. Keep living by faith. That's how you continue in the Christian life. It isn't saying no workplace. The Proverbs 31 woman did work outside the home. But the domestic role is primary.

Application

But what about Christian women who will never give birth, whether married or single? How do you follow this instruction?

Being made for childbearing indicates God designed women to nurture others. Women can use their nurturing capacities in other ways: ministry to children, helping single mothers, helping married mothers with children, ministry to other

women, caring for the needy, helping the disabled, caring for widows, caring for seniors. There's numerous ways to use the nurture instinct.

Non-Christian

You're considering Christianity. What does this mean for you?

There's a Creator God. He designed men and women with differences. We live well when we live within God's design. You don't use a wrench to start a fire.

This Creator God is a Savior. He saves men and women from their sins. He sent his Son Jesus to die on the cross for men and women so that whoever believes can be saved.

How should you respond to this God? In all things faith. Whether what he says about male and female roles or the things he says about sin. Trust and follow Jesus.

Christian, like you trust what God says about forgiveness of sins, trust what he says about male and female roles.