

Exploring Biblical Gender Equality

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Topic: Two New Testament Problem Passages--Handout

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Introduction

Why is the topic of Biblical Gender Equality so important?

1.It is true from the Word of God.

2.In the Book of Genesis, we get an idea ‘where’ mankind came from.

In the Creation Story, we read that God created the first man and the first woman. The man and the woman were equal at creation.

3.Though Patriarchy can be seen in the Old Testament, is it clear that Patriarchy is not God’s design for His people. Patriarchy is a tradition of man and not a Kingdom principle.

4.Understanding Biblical Gender Equality sets God’s people free!

5. Understanding Biblical Gender Equality is the foundation for:

***healthy marriages,**

***healthy families,**

***healthy church leadership, and**

***healthy churches.**

6.Biblical Gender Equality is a complex topic and deals with many inter-connected Bible topics.

7.It is important to study this topic so that each of us can have our own answers.

8.When we understand the biblical foundations of this topic, then we can faithfully teach God’s Word to others and see the fruit of stronger families and vibrant churches.

2 Tim. 3:16, 17 reminds us that:

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

It is important that Christians know what they believe and why.

The whole Woman and Man topic is both very serious and yet it is also quite humorous—since men understanding women and women understanding men has been a hilarious topic throughout the generations!!

It is important that we look at our own cultures and how we consider the male and female issue--in the home, in the church, and in society.

As Christians, we need to appreciate the finished work of Jesus Christ--completed on the cross for men and women.

Christians can lead the way by providing answers for a biblical view of gender and how people ought to treat one another, especially in the Family of God!

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Humans have problems dealing with human sexuality. There is much brokenness in this area, which is part of who we are as humans in a fallen world.

There are only two kinds of humans that God created—male and female.

Christians should be the ones who lead the way in understanding human sexuality and who model what godly living is all about.

What people believe about gender and the theological roots of belief systems are issues that need to be explored. Much harm has been done as traditional cultural beliefs about women and biblical beliefs have been intertwined to support male dominance in a marriage, in the church, and in society.

It is time to dismantle entrenched flawed beliefs and practices in light of a more complete view of gender. This can be done by deepening our understanding of what the Bible really says and how gender equality can be brought forward as a valid belief and practice.

Here are some Questions to stimulate Thinking:

- 1. Are Christian men supposed to have more privilege than Christian women in the home and in the church?**
- 2. Should gender differences influence an individual's place in ministry?**
- 3. When it comes to teaching the Word of God in the church today, who is allowed to preach and why?**
- 4. Is the gift of preaching the 'wrong gift' to have when you are a Christian woman?**
- 5. If church ministry is to be grounded in servant leadership, rather than hierarchy, why are women so often NOT permitted to preach or teach in the local church?**
- 6. If ministry is: 'serving' on the behalf of Christ, then shouldn't women and men be able to make up a ministry team to minister to the needs of the local church?**
- 7. If in 1 Corinthians 11, it says that women should wear a headcovering, why do most women attend church without a hat or headcovering now?**

It is IN the Bible—why don't we do this now??

- 8. Would your church have a woman in the function of a pastor, elder, or deacon? Why or why not?**
- 9. Why do we need to work for gender equality in the home, in the church, and in the world?**
- 10. Does the gender power imbalance further fuel and justify violence, especially against women (and children)?**

What Does the Bible Really Say Regarding These Two Problem Passages?

Introduction

Usually when people speak of biblical texts on the ministry of women, they refer to mainly two passages--the two that appear opposed to the idea. These texts need to be interpreted rightly, but ALL of the Bible must be included in the discussion, not just two passages.

< To begin,we need to consider the Ancient City of Ephesus. We need to understand the historical, geographical, and cultural background about this city so that we can better appreciate the context of the words that Paul was writing in his personal letter to Timothy. The more we know about the places in which the Bible was written the more we will be able to read the Bible as it was meant to be read--as the account of real people in real places.

Ephesus was one of the most important cities in early Christianity.

Jerusalem was the city most well-known, but Ephesus runs a close second, along with Antioch. Later, in the second century and beyond, Rome became the most prominent city for Christianity.

The ruins of Ephesus lie on the western edge of modern day Turkey, on the coast of the Aegean Sea. Our knowledge of the ancient city of Ephesus enriches our understanding of the New Testament, especially Luke's account in Acts 18 and 19.

The pastoral letters were written to fight false teaching and heresy. Approximately one-fifth of the 242 verses in the Pastoral Epistles deal with false teaching.

The concern to prevent false teaching is expressed as the reason why Timothy was left in Ephesus. We read this in 1 Timothy 1:3-4.

“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work--which is by faith.”

Speculations about myths and genealogies, along with emphasis on knowledge and asceticism had led many astray. Some of the best successes of the false teachers appear to be among the women.

Paul uses an obscure Greek word, *authentain*, that scholars have struggled to translate because it only appears once in the New Testament.

It is important to recognize that Paul does NOT say “to every one of you” OR “to all persons,” which were his usual phrases when speaking to the universal church.

First Timothy 5 treats a number of problems caused by women in connection with false teaching. The concern in 1 Tim. 5:13 is not merely for gossiping, but for spreading the false teaching which “turned some aside to follow Satan” (5:15).

Second Timothy 3:6, 7 speaks of false teachers who creep into houses and take captive “silly women” who are ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The whole of 1 Timothy 2 must be interpreted in this context of: false teaching.

In 1 Tim. 2:9, women were to pray with proper dignity and modesty in the way they dressed, which is the same subject as in 1 Cor. 11:5.

The desire is that both men and women pray and that women in Ephesus learn in humility and quietness, which is expected of ALL Christians.

In a society where women were not educated and had not previously been full participants in everyday life, women would have been easy targets for false teachers.

The prohibition or corrective in 1 Timothy 2 was required by conditions in that time and that place.

These words, in Paul’s very personal letter to encourage Timothy, should NOT be used as a universal prohibition of teaching by women.

If women were to be restricted from ever teaching in the churches, wouldn’t the Apostle Paul have written commands in each and every epistle to the various churches??!!

If it was so important to God and to Paul, that women NOT teach or have authority over men ever, then surely, wouldn't we see this explained in Romans and several of the other epistles?! Maybe Peter and James would have included something as well.

We simply cannot find such commands anywhere!

There are only two passages and these are in letters dealing with specific situations at a particular time in history.

Let us look at these two basic problem passages in the New Testament--in light of the rest of Scripture.

Let us consider these two difficult passages IN the 'context' in which they were written. What was the time period, the culture, and the situation going on in these early New Testament churches?

1 Tim. 2:11 "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."

1 Cor. 14:34, 35 "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. 35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church."

Here is the 1 Tim. 2:11 passage from the King James Version:

"But I suffer not [I do not permit] a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

Let's look at SILENCE. What exactly does SILENCE mean?

Illustration: So, let's take a walk together to church. Men, women, and children are on their way to church. Everyone is happy and sharing about their lives the past week, with one another.

As they approach the front door to the church, and the women enter the church door, they all stop talking--since the Bible says that 'women are to remain silent in the church'.

So not wanting to offend God, the Bible, or their families, ALL the women NOW stop talking.

Here are some questions that we might ask ourselves:

- Is it OK for women to just whisper in church, but not to talk out loud?
- Is it OK for women to SING during worship, but not to talk in church?
- Can women read the Bible out loud during a church service, since this would be ‘talking’ and be very Un-Silent?
- Can ladies give announcements about church events OR do they need to pass a note to one of the men leaders in order to get this announcement stated out loud for the Christian community?

So, you can see that things are starting to get ridiculous with such interpretations of these particular Bible passages. Both of these Scriptures have kept women silent in the church for centuries!

What is the biblical context for each of these passages?

< Let’s continue to look at the CONTEXT for these problem verses.

The context of 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 begins with verse 26:

“What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.”

It is clear that the worship of the early Church was different from our usual meetings. When the church met for worship, all the believers were encouraged to make a contribution to the gathering by offering some item for praise or instruction.

Paul's concern in chapter 14:26-36 is the disruption of the Christian worship and fellowship meeting.

Women were not the only ones asked to be silent in the church in Corinth.

There were 3 groups of people who Paul needed to give instructions to here:

1. Anyone who was going to speak in tongues was told to keep silent if no interpreter was present (14:28).
2. If one prophet was speaking and revelation came to someone else, the first prophet should be silent (14:30).

3. The women, that is, specifically the wives, should be silent and ask their questions to their husbands at home (14:34-35).

The reader begins to see that all three of these groups are specifically commanded regarding silence rather than speech in a particular situation. We must remember that speech itself is not generally being forbidden. (Waldemar Kowalski, Ph.D.)

The issue with regard to women is clearly within the context of the disruption of their charismatic house church worship service.

Apparently, married women were disrupting the service by asking questions, so they were instructed to wait and ask their husband their questions at home.

Here is another problem that arises:

- **IF this is understood to be any woman, what if the woman was single and didn't have a husband? Who would she ask?**
- **What if a woman had a husband who wasn't a Christian, who would she ask?**

Both the prophets and the wives are to be under control. Prophets could control their use of their gift and likewise, the wives could control their speech.

One thing seems to stand out from a look at the Greek words and their tenses: "the wives who are prophets are to be in a state of self-control." (Waldemar Kowalski, Ph.D.)

One scholar suggested that since the context is charismatic worship, then it is not a stretch to understand that the wives could have been 'judging' their own husband's words of prophecy.

"The context for 1 Cor. 11:6 is the speaking of women in the congregation, with disgrace being not in the act of speaking but in the inappropriate demeanor (an uncovered head). The disgrace of 1 Cor. 14:35 would also logically be related to inappropriate actions or demeanor (interrogating one's husband in public) not the act of speaking in itself.

The repeated use of *disgrace* here in 14:34-35, echoing 11:5-6, reinforces that the activity in question has to do with charismatic worship, and specifically, prophecy." (Waldemar Kowalski, Ph.D.)

To summarize, we can look at their situation this way:

1. Among the responsibilities of all the prophets was the need to discern or to weigh a prophecy being given, with no indication given that the female prophets were excused from this responsibility.

2. However, when it came to the issue of a wife judging her own husband's prophecy, she was to abstain from doing so in the congregation, doing this at home instead.

3. The disruptive effect of such public action would be offensive in virtually any society!

In conclusion, with this section, we can see that:

“The instruction to these wives in 1 Cor. 14:34-35 is therefore dealing with charismatic events not general behavior, and these verses belong in the general instructions of Corinthians 14.” (Waldemar Kowalski, Ph.D.)

Clearly, this passage says what it does because of problems in the Corinthian church and attitudes about women in the ancient world and NOT because women should NEVER speak in church.

To suggest otherwise removes 1 Corinthians 14:34 from its context and creates a huge contradiction with chapter 11, verse 5.

1 Tim. 2:11-12

The most common objection to women taking up leadership in churches comes from a plain reading of 1 Timothy 2:11-12:

“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.”

With the plain reading of this Scripture passage, it seems to be quite straightforward with no exceptions. Yet, we need to understand that there was a lot more going on when Paul wrote these words.

Making sense of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 requires some insight into the specific words and phrases that Paul used and how they were understood in his day, as well as understanding what was going on in the church in Ephesus, to which Paul's letter was a response.

“We must remember that the ‘Pastoral Epistles,’ 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, were written out of a concern for heresy that was creeping into and weakening the church in Ephesus and in Crete. (See 1 Tim. 1:3-11, 19-20; 4:1-10; 6:3-4, 10; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:14, 16-18, 23; 3:1-9, 13; 4:3-4; Titus 1:10-16; 3:9-11).”(Darrell Johnson, Ph.D.)

Paul’s goal is to guide Timothy in ways to help him stop the false teaching. The false teaching is of such central concern to Paul that nearly every verse in this letter relates to it.

1 Tim. 1:3-11 identifies 5 aspects of the false teaching: myths and endless genealogies, controversies, causing people to leave the faith, meaningless talk, and inappropriate application of the law.”(Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

Here is the key to interpreting the text: The false teaching was gaining access in the church through women. Some of the women were being led astray, deceived by the heretical teachers. (See 2 Tim. 3:3-7.) And they were adopting the attitude of the heretical teachers in their attempt to teach others within the Ephesian church.(Darrell Johnson, Ph.D.)

“The theme of chapter 2 is Paul’s desire for quietness and peace. (2:2, 8, 11, 12, 15). This peace is a peace in contrast to the contentiousness of the false teachers who are clearly still on Paul’s mind (as is evidence by 2:3 and 2:7).

Peace is the context where true teaching can flourish. This chapter focuses on what Timothy should do to suppress further false teaching by the people who were apparently most influenced by it: women.” (Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

One scholar has stated that: “Any interpretation of the text, which ignores those teachers and their influence on the women will be severely incomplete, if not entirely misleading.” (S. Scott Bartchy, Ph.D.)

< What was the heretical teaching that women were being influenced by?

We do not know for sure. But, from 1 and 2 Timothy, we have some clues. Paul was dealing with pagan and heretical teachings coming into the Ephesian church.

Proto-Gnosticism is what had infiltrated the Ephesian church. The Gnostic ascetic attitude toward marriage and a low view of the material world also fits the description of the false teachers in 1 Tim 4:3-4.

The prominent teaching role of women in Gnostic circles helps explain Paul's restriction on women teaching in this situation.

No other book of the Bible has a higher proportion of verses focused specially on problems regarding women: 21 out of 113 verses. (1 Tim. 2:9-15; 4:7; 5:3-7, 9-16).

Because of the low view of the body, dualists regarded what one did with one's body as of little importance. This allowed them to excuse extremely permissive behavior. This blatant behavior was opposed by Paul in statements throughout 1 Timothy which emphasized: holiness, propriety, modesty, and the avoidance of arguments.

Here is a summary of what Paul was clarifying to Timothy.

First, Paul appeals to the Creation narrative--NOT to argue that women should not teach men because woman was created after man--BUT to counter the heretical teaching that Eve 'gave life to Adam.'

One erroneous teaching was about the first woman--that the first woman gave life to the first man--not the other way around. This teaching was incorrect and far from biblical. Ephesus was a city filled with idolatrous teachings and pagan worship.

Second, Paul appealed to the Genesis account of Eve falling for the serpent's deception--NOT to argue that women are more susceptible to deception and, therefore, should not teach men--BUT to oppose the heretical teaching that Eve was the 'mediator' who brought the secret knowledge to Adam.(Darrell Johnson, Ph.D.)

“Contrary to many English translations, “there is no known instance in Greek where the word (*phlyaroi*) means ‘gossips.’” This is important because it indicates that these young widows were not merely gossiping but were probably conveying rubbish philosophy, for *nonsense* is what the term normally describes.”

It is difficult to imagine Paul saying that these women had “already turned aside to follow Satan” if this word meant merely gossips and had nothing to do with false teaching.” (1 Tim. 5:5) (Gordon Fee, Ph.D.)

Paul's obvious reason for limiting "teaching by women on Eve's deception is that false teaching had deceived women in Ephesus." Eve's deception epitomizes serious theological deception.

"Since Ephesian believers probably met in house churches, the reference to younger widows going "house to house . . . saying things they ought not" (in 5:13) may refer to house churches.

This blatantly foolish teaching promoted by women had a serious effect on the church, which is implied by Paul's increasingly critical descriptions of their error from "idle" to "talk nonsense" to "saying things they ought not" to "some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan." (Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

< Why did the message of these false teachers have such an appeal to women, especially widows?

"Three characteristics of their message stand out that would have little appeal to men, and each has parallels in 1 Corinthians, proving that these issues were well-known to Paul:

1. 1 Tim. 4:3: "They forbid people to marry" (cf. 1 Cor 7:1-5).
2. 1 Tim. 4:3: "They order people to abstain from certain foods" (cf. 1 Cor. 10:23-31).
3. 2 Tim. 2:17-18: "They say that the resurrection has already taken place" (cf. the denial of the resurrection of the body in 1 Cor. 4:8; 15:12, 22, 29, 35; 2 Thess. 2:2)."

(This may be based on Jesus' words Matt. 22:30.)(Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

Since this belief system deemed that the "things of this world are of no spiritual value, they denied the goodness of God's created world and advocated abstinence from sex and food. These false teachings would appeal particularly to women in Ephesus, especially widows, since having no husband, they were social outsiders demoted to the fringes of power in their society.

This false teaching affirmed their dignity. Indeed, it affirmed that they were already in the ideal (eschatological) state of being *single* before Christ. It proclaimed an exalted status for women and a freedom from the obligations of

marriage. It is no wonder that this new teaching attracted women.” It is likely that men were not interested in this teaching, apart from the original false teachers. (Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

These false teachings had special appeal to these women at Ephesus. This probably explains why Paul specifically restricts teaching by women.

The greed of these false teachers suggests that they targeted women who could afford to pay tutors (1 Tim. 6:5-10). “Although they forbade marriage, the way Paul describes the false teachers suggests that they had illicit sexual relations with women caught up in their teaching. (1:19; 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:22 in contrast, and 2 Tim. 3:4-60).

It can be noted that Paul exhorted these women “to dress modestly, with decency and propriety” (1 Tim. 2:9), “to continue in holiness with propriety” (2:15), and to be “worthy of respect” (3:11), and this is why he refers to widows “who live for pleasure” (5:6), whose “sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ” (5:11).

The false teachers could maintain a “form of godliness” while using the philosophy of dualism to justify illicit sex as irrelevant to their spiritual life (2 Tim. 3:5).

In response to this same error in Corinth, Paul tells Christian men they must not go to prostitutes (1 Cor. 6:15-18), since “your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.”(Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

The situation in the church family in Ephesus had become quite serious. Women had become central to the false teaching that was dividing the church. It was time for Paul to suggest drastic pastoral action to assist young Timothy. In order to ensure peace, the most practical solution was clearly explained: let the women learn but not assume for themselves authority to teach a man.

To understand ‘why’ Paul spoke into this situation the way he did is crucial to understanding the intent of his instruction.

The *occasion* that prompted Paul’s words in 1 Tim. 2:11-15 is important for understanding both *what* Paul was prohibiting and *the reasoning* he had behind it.

In 1 Timothy, Paul was addressing a particular problem at a particular moment in history. These women in this church were believing and spreading heretical teaching.

Just as Paul instructed Titus to silence the male teachers of heresy in Crete (Titus 1:11), so he instructed Timothy not to allow the women of Ephesus to teach.

Though 1 and 2 Timothy were written as personal letters, from a mentor to a mentee, far too many have read these epistles as though they were written as a church manual. Rather, these two letters are the very personal words of Paul directed solely to the lead pastor in a complex first century church situation.

Paul was giving Timothy counsel on how to conduct himself in this church family. Paul’s counsel was directly to Timothy and was not even addressed to the church in Ephesus. This fact is characterized by the precise words chosen.

The entire letter is directed specifically and only to ‘son’ Timothy. Timothy is the subject--and Paul is personally guiding Timothy in how he should conduct himself.

1 Tim 3:14: “I write these things to you [singular], hoping to come to you [singular] quickly.”

1 Tim 3:15 reads, “in order that you [singular, referring to Timothy] might know how [you] should conduct [yourself] in the church of the living God.”

Further, there is no general address to the Ephesians. “Nowhere does this letter address the members of the Ephesian church, let alone all churches or all Christians. . . . The future of the church in Ephesus depended on Timothy more than anyone else, so it makes sense that Paul would address Timothy’s own actions.”(Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

Paul’s solution may be paraphrased: “Let them learn so that eventually they may fulfill their teaching aspirations, but this privilege requires responsible study first.” (Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

Paul exhorted the women to “receive instruction.” Women could learn and then do what women like Priscilla were doing—teaching men. But, for a time, these Ephesian women needed to learn—to grow stronger in God’s Word.

In the meantime, the Apostle called the women of the Ephesian church back to basics: to adorn themselves with the good works that reveal true godliness. But that was something to which he also called men. And Paul called the women of the Ephesian church back to faith, love, holiness, self-restraint, and submissiveness; the same thing he called ALL believers to in his letter to the Ephesians. (Darrell Johnson, Ph.D.)

Paul actually instructs a woman--to learn.

Paul uses a Greek imperative form that doesn't come across in written English.

References to silence and full submission match words used to describe foundational religious learning of the day, similar to confirmation or catechism.

The text in 1 Timothy 2:11, 12 is more difficult to understand, but the issues are similar to those in the Corinthian church.

Paul's goal is to establish women in the true faith--so that they will not teach the church error.

Women were called to decency or self-control. This parallels the restriction on prayer given to men--and both counter the effect of false teaching.

The most difficult part of this passage is 2:12, which is usually translated as:

“I do not permit a woman to teach or to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness.”

The problem with the word translated “have dominion over” (*authentein* in Greek), is that it does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament. This is not the usual word that was used for ‘authority.’

Outside of the Bible, this word is used for violent acts, such as murder, suicide, and having dominion over. The uses of the word for murder and suicide obviously are not suitable for this text.

If the reference is to authority, as seems likely, the negative connotations of this word would require a translation such as “domineer.”

Whatever the meaning, what is prohibited of women with this word seems so negative that it would not be permitted of men either.

The words of 1 Timothy 2:13-15 are difficult for any understanding of the text, but they seem to be strong comments directed at women influenced by false teachers.

The only other reference to Eve in the New Testament is in 2 Corinthians 11:3 which is also concerned with seduction by false teachers. When the fall of humanity is discussed elsewhere, reference is always to the disobedience of Adam.

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There is no question that in this passage women were specifically prohibited from teaching men. The question we must ask is: “Why?”

Were there reasons, in this circumstance, WHY women were prohibited from teaching men--or were women NEVER to teach men EVER??!!

If we say NEVER, then there are obvious contradictions between this text and other texts like 1 Corinthians 11:5, which says: “But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head . . .”

Therefore, a commitment to the unity of Scripture requires a closer analysis of this passage. We need to be reminded that this epistle is NOT a church manual, but rather a personal guide for Timothy in his ministry in Ephesus.

There was a specific reason why women were prohibited from teaching in Ephesus.

“The importance to Paul of women learning is rooted in the gospel, as he expresses just prior in 1 Tim. 2:3-6: “For this is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” To come to knowledge of the truth, they must be taught.

The desire for peace without trouble is not silence but quietness-peace, the opposite of discord and disruption. The Greek word indicates a manner of learning that was culturally regarded as being the appropriate attitude and deportment of a well-bred serious student. Paul here commands that women be permitted to learn as proper students, who would come with a quiet and teachable spirit.

“Silence” would also contradict Paul’s approval of women prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11:5-13.

Quietness is a more natural pair with submission than “silence.”

It is sometimes assumed that learn “in all submission” implies a marriage context and refers to submission to one’s husband, but 1 Tim. 2:11 says nothing about marriage.

Instead, the submission referenced here ‘specifically modifies “to learn.”’ Consequently, it is natural to understand the submission to be submission to the truths that they are learning, “not to a wife’s submissiveness to her husband.”

Submission here is best understood as obedience to God’s commands-- specifically by welcoming the truth and letting it become a protective shield against the temptations and the enticing words of the false teachers. Verse 11 is about submission to Christian doctrine.

Similarly, in verse 14, the woman was thoroughly deceived about God’s command. The Genesis account of the woman’s deception deals entirely with the serpent’s distortion of God’s Word, not the man’s authority.”(Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

Although addressed here specifically to women, submission should also characterize men (e.g. 1 Cor. 16:16; Eph. 5:21).

To counteract the influence of false teachers on women, Paul calls them to modesty and good works (1 Tim. 2:9-10) and commands: “Let women learn in quietness and full submission” to the true faith. (1 Tim. 2:11)(Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

< Does the Grammatical Form “I am not permitting” Favor a Present or Universal Prohibition?

The Greek verb, grammatical form, is better suited for a present prohibition. Paul chose the first person singular (“I”) present active indicative (“am not permitting”), as he often does, to indicate his own personal advice of position for a situation that is not universal.

Every occurrence of “I do not permit” (epitrépo in the Greek OT) refers to a specific situation, never to a universally applicable permission.

Similarly, the vast majority of the NT occurrences of *epitrepoc* clearly refers to a specific time or for a short or limited time duration only.

In English, unlike Greek, “it is permitted” almost always implies a continuing state. In English it looks to be universal, but is not in Greek. It is not used in Scripture of universally applicable commandments. (Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

Paul, who more than any other NT writer, distinguished his personal advice for a particular situation from permanent instruction.

- Did not give 1 Tim. 2:12’s restrictions on women in the Ephesian church any universalizing qualifier.
- Nor did he claim that these restrictions on women were from the Lord
- Or that they should apply in all the churches.
- In other cases, Paul uses universalizing qualifiers, namely, words such as ‘all’ or ‘every’ in the context which show that Paul has a universal application in mind.

(See: Rom. 12:1-3; 1 Cor. 4:16; Gal. 5:2, 3; 1 Tim. 2:1, 8.)

- Paul’s verb choice favors a limited, not universal, prohibition. One cannot simply assume it to be universal any more than one can assume that the prohibition of braided hair, gold, pearls, and wearing expensive clothing is universal or that men every-where must raise their hands when they pray ((2:8-9).

One cannot import a universal prohibition of women teaching or having authority from the qualifications for overseers in 3:1-7--since its subject is “anyone.” (Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

There are a number of reasons why this is not a universal command. Here are a few:

1. Paul mentions many women among his fellow workers in the Gospel and involved in teaching. No other Pauline passage prohibits women from teaching.
2. Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother.
3. *Epitreo* is a verb that is rarely used for universal permission or prohibition and never in the first person present active indicative.

4. Titus 2:3 commands older women to be “teachers of what is good.” Since Paul wrote this passage about this same time, he must not have intended a universal ban on women teaching. (Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

For those who declare that: “The words are still the words of the Apostle Paul, writing inspired Scripture” evades the issue.

“The question is whether the Holy Spirit gave this text in order to meet the particular needs at Ephesus, needs which may or may not be pertinent in other places and times OR whether he gave this as a universally binding prohibition.

It is a question of exegesis and hermeneutics, NOT a question of inspiration or authority.

Paul frequently wrote advice or instructions for particular situations, instructions that were never intended to be universal commands.

Understanding his epistles as letters to particular situations can be vital to their proper interpretation. . . . Careful study can often detect the presence of such principles underlying his statements. But this does not mean that most of Paul’s statements are “universally valid principles.”

Paul uses the verb “to teach” broadly of anyone teaching either good or bad content in public or private to groups or individuals.

It is precisely because “to teach” covers so much, including things that Paul approves for women in other passages, that one properly looks to the content of 1 Tim 2:12 for qualification.”(Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

< In Other Passages, Paul Affirmed Women Teaching

Affirmations of women teaching are particularly prominent in the Pastoral Epistles. (See Titus 2:1-3, 4-5.)

Teachers ministered by exhortation and teaching as well as byexample.

“In light of these three women, Lois, Eunice and Prisca, specifically identified by name, in 2 Timothy, all of whom taught effectively in personal discipleship, it is surely mistaken to think that women are excluded from the “faithful persons who will be able to teach others also” in 2 Tim 2:2.

1 Cor 14:26, 24, 31--each one of you. It is qualified only by the goal of edification. These ‘all’s’ must include women. 1 Cor 11:5

Just as it would be wrong to exclude any particular group from those who may forgive one another or sing psalms, so it is wrong to exclude women as a group from those who may “teach and counsel.” (Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

“The functions of ‘teaching’ and ‘admonishing’ . . . are not bound to a distinct office but were exercised by members of the community because of the gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon them (1 Cor. 12:28; 14:26).” (Eduard Lohse, Ph.D.)

Some churches today allow only a few to teach--and the teaching is virtually all one way, teacher to learner.

While the verses in 1 Corinthians do not reveal that all believers have the gift of teaching or require that every member minister in each of the ways here listed, it does teach a widely shared teaching ministry, not one restricted to particular individuals (1 Cor 12:28; 14:26).

“Repeatedly, Paul implies that women are to be involved in the teaching ministry of the church--a ministry open to all believers.

Paul also teaches that particular individuals are specifically gifted by the Holy Spirit as teachers. He often stresses the importance of the office of teacher.

There is no convincing evidence that Paul excluded all women either from the gift or the office of teacher. The Spirit is free to bestow the gift of teaching on whomever he pleases and to appoint whomever he wills (1Cor. 12:11).

Paul’s use of words like “teach” and “teacher” in contexts applying to both men and women shows not simply that women as well as men are exhorted to “teach one another” in the body of believers but also shows that men may be included in the scope of those taught by women.

Consequently, to interpret 1 Tim. 2:12 as a universal prohibition of women teaching men causes this passage to conflict with Paul’s teaching elsewhere. Rather, one should expect that Paul is here prohibiting women from teaching in some qualified sense.”(Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

“Paul’s primary concern in 1 Timothy is not the original false teachers, but with the impact they have made, especially on women. Paul wants Timothy to address a second round of false teaching particularly by women in the Ephesian church. Thus, although Paul’s letters affirm many women in church

leadership, here in Ephesus false teaching by women was a big enough threat that Paul restricts teaching by women.

The most likely reason Paul commands women to learn in quietness, restricts their teaching, and argues for it, based on Eve's deception, is that there was a significant problem with women who had been deceived and were spreading this destructive teaching. One ought to try to understand this restriction within the occasion for the letter stated in 1:3-11, namely: false teaching." (Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

"Similarly, at about the same time, Paul silences the teaching of the circumcision group in Crete "because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach" (Titus 1:11). Both prohibitions address the most problematic group confronting Paul's colleagues.

A probable contributing factor to Paul's restriction was that most women in Ephesus from either a Jewish or Gentile background would have had little knowledge of the Scriptures and the Christian message.

This description fits women in the Ephesian church who, because of inadequate Christian education, were deceived by the false teaching. Particularly significant in this statement is the implication that their error was not in desiring to be teachers of the law, but rather in teaching without adequate knowledge. Until they are properly taught, they should not make blundering attempts at teaching, but rather learn, just as 2:11-12 requires." (Philip Payne, Ph.D.)

Conclusion

We have taken a serious look at two of the problem passages that have been used to silence women in church leadership. I trust that the time spent looking at the context of these passages has helped to shine more light on how these passages ought to be read and understood. It is important to also consider how these verses have been used and abused by so many in the past.

We have been considering this question:

Since these two passages are IN the Bible, were they put there to: keep women silent in the church for all time??!

Hopefully, we can see from our study that the answer to that question is: No!

There is nothing in Christianity that relates ONLY to our salvation; our faith relates to ALL of life, including the status of male and female.

The issue is whether our attitudes concerning race, social class, and gender will be determined by our oneness in Christ in the new age of Christ's Kingdom—OR--by the barriers and values of the old age.

Much harm has been done as traditional cultural beliefs about women and biblical beliefs have been intertwined to support male dominance in a marriage, in the church, and in society.

It is time to dismantle entrenched flawed beliefs and practices in light of a more complete view of gender. This can be done by deepening our understanding of what the Bible really says and how gender equality can be established as a valid belief and practice in any culture.

The attempt of various church assemblies to keep women in submission and to keep them silent in church is clearly based on faulty interpretive methods of the New Testament text.

Furthermore, when some groups demand that women be subject to all males in their church, without considering the New Testament message about women in the church as a whole, this misrepresents the biblical text.

This defective persuasion contributes to the practice of women being underutilized in the Body of Christ and undervalued as gifted children of God to the Church. God's heart is for the full humanity and equality of men and women—in the church and in society.

Has there been a church tradition that has been firmly in place for far too long--that needs to be re-examined and then set right?!

Change Begins When Faulty Belief Systems Are Changed!

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Sculpture: Always Together by Vladimir Kush

