



THEMATIC OVERVIEW

A time of learning, discussion, and prayer as we explore Scriptural teaching about gender and leadership in the church.

As a Grace Group, we will explore together how to embody God's grace in our practice given the historic harms and contention in church and culture around how gender and leadership are held together.

Welcome + Opening Prayer + Commitments

*Show me your ways, Lord,
teach me your paths.*

*Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long. —Psalm 25:4-5*

*But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults. —Psalm 19:12*

Commitments:

- 1/ Is this Scriptural?
- 2/ How do we graciously *see* one another?
- 3/ How do we image God as we work this out for His glory and the world's good?

Discussion Overview

Week 1/ **Why** is this discussion important? Beginning at the Beginning: A Study in Genesis 1-3
Week 2/ **What** were women doing in Scripture? A biblical survey of how women have served.
Week 3/ **How** is it possible for women to serve so broadly given seemingly prohibitive texts?
Week 4/ **What now** for All Souls as we embody God's grace in our practice?

RESOURCES

*Find more resources for further reading and listening on our website:
allsoulsseattle.org/resources/collections/gender-and-leadership*

A Study of Prohibitive Passages

See the back side of this page.

Story: Kara Barrett

Discussion + Reflection

- How have you heard these passages taught before?
- What questions do you still have about these passages?
- What is one thing you want to remember about this discussion?
- What is one thing you want to do or do differently because of this discussion?

Ephesians 5:21-32

21 *Submit* to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 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. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.



Then Paul quotes Genesis in verse 31:

31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

Does this imply a submission of women to men built in by God at creation?

- Context: Household codes governed interactions during Jesus day. Roman household codes and Jewish household codes of this time were highly patriarchal (Aristotle's code only speaks to the masters). Ephesians, when compared to such codes, is strikingly different in that it addresses *both* parties (most codes were simply written for masters about their subjects). Ephesians calls for mutual submission, not one-way submission. What if Paul was teaching Christians to live differently within their Roman context? Under Roman law, wives legally had to submit to their husbands. Women could not conduct legal or financial transactions without a man acting on their behalf. Beth Allison Barr explains,

"Many scholars argue that Paul subordinates his entire discussion of the household does under verse 21: 'Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.' When this verse is read at the beginning of the Ephesians household codes, it changes everything. Yes, wives are to submit, but so are husbands. Instead of underscoring the inferiority of women, Ephesians 5 underscores the equality of women... Instead of making Christians just another part of the Roman crowd (emphasizing female submission), the mutual submission in verse 21 'is characteristic of a way of life that sets believers apart from the non believing world.' Because of its radical implications, verse 21 must be distanced from verse 22 in Bible translations that wish to uphold complementarian views. ... The subjection of women is highlighted in the ESV translation... and the call for husbands to submit is minimized" (p. 50).


Ephesians 5:18-27 
New International Version 

18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Instructions for Christian Households

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of

Ephesians 5:18-27  English Standard Version 

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives and Husbands

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is

- *Submit:*
 - Submit is the only verb in verses 21-22, more evidence the verses are meant to be joined together with mutual submission emphasized. Verse 18 is actually the starting point of this passage: be filled with the Spirit: 1/ by speaking... 2/ giving thanks... 3/ submitting to one another.
 - Type 1 'Submit' the involuntary obedience to some external authority.
 - Type 2 'Submit' voluntary service to another person out of love, humility, or compassion. Grammar nerds use the phrase 'the middle voice' for actions one does to oneself. This means I myself submit voluntarily.
 - Type 2 submission diffuses and challenges type one demands for submission and claims at authority. Of all people Jesus can make demands and claims of authority, but he modeled voluntary submission and service in love. This is most powerfully captured in the way Jesus takes on the task only a slave would in his cultural moment, washing the feet of his disciples. His disciples are to do as Jesus has done to them. They are explicitly told not to rule as the Gentiles do (Matthew 20:25) bringing into subjection and having control over one another. Their authority to proclaim forgiveness of sins, the keys given to Peter to loose and bind is authority over demons and unclean spirits, illness (in healing prayer), and nonhuman enemies of the gospel, never human beings.
 - TAKEAWAY: Paul is calling for men and women to voluntarily opt out of the power struggle by voluntarily subjecting themselves to one another. This is pointing back to the Genesis 1-2 mutuality and compatibility and complementarity that God intended and is restoring to our relationships.
- *Head:*
 - What did Paul's metaphor mean? Head typically means 'head of the company,' as in boss.
 - But two different words in Greek for "head" help us out:
 - Head: when wanting to say 'source' or 'beginning' translators used Kephale κεφαλῆ
 - Head: when wanting to say 'leader' translators used Archon ἄρχων
 - Here, the word used is Kephale, meaning 'source' as in 'headwaters' and this is more likely what Paul had in mind: "Christ is the beginning or source of the church as its body, and also the one from whom it receives its nourishment" (Witt, 113). This fits better with what is meant by Christ being the one who fills all in all.
 - Headship in this understanding is understood as giving life to the body. The context here and throughout Paul's writing on this is not a notion of "authority over" or "causing to submit" but rather of mutual love and care, nourishment and protection (Witt, 113). This makes better sense of the one-flesh union between husband and wife, between Christ and the church as his body.
 - TAKEAWAY: In Ephesians, Christians are not to be masters demanding obedience from one another, but servants of one another who voluntarily yield to one another out of love without succumbing to coercion. This doesn't mean there are no gender differences. Nor does it deny legit places for authorities in our lives, but Christians are here called to a servant leadership for the building up and nourishment of the body.
- For those of you particularly gripped by Wayne Grudem and John Piper's perspective on these things, see the specific ways in which William Witt responds to their arguments on pp. 115-120.

1 Timothy 2:9-15

9 I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

If we explore the world behind the text, specifically the world of the cult of Artemis in Ephesus, we learn the following:

Dress Code

The dress codes stipulated for women by Paul are most likely linked to an injunction regarding women imitating and dedicating themselves to Artemis, which would have been common practice in the temple. In verse 9, the word used for braids or plaits (*plegmasin*) is a rare term that specifically refers to the hairstyle of Ephesian women who served Artemis, as they imitated her hair and clothing. Women addressed in 1 Timothy are being told to no longer dress as they would have done to serve Artemis. Further, the expensive clothing Paul refers to (*himatismo polytelei*) is the clothing the wealthy priestesses wore in cultic activities.

Public Piety

In verse 10, Paul speaks of “good deeds appropriate for women who profess to worship God.” Not only were women to imitate the goddess Artemis, they were also expected to perform public good deeds and give generous donations out of piety to Artemis and the gods. In 1 Timothy, the women are exhorted to dress themselves with good deeds motivated by piety to God, not to Artemis. So Paul is contrasting the public gifts made to the cult that would have brought public honor to the giver and the gifts made by the new convert to the church, which gives expression to a new and very different form of piety.

Behavior

Women of the cult of Artemis are depicted as assertive, competitive, and well-versed in their religion: “They recite prayers, serve piously, and fiercely compete to attain various religious roles linked to their adornment and activities... They assertively promote the Artemis myth and proudly receive the worship of the goddess who is mysteriously linked to Isis.”

Myths

As previously mentioned, the purpose of Paul's letter to Timothy is to stop certain false teachers from teaching or instructing. These false teachers occupy themselves with myths (1 Tim 1:3). In Ephesus, there was a blend of Greek (Artemis) and Egyptian (Isis) mythology. According to Greek mythology, woman was the author of man; woman came first. In 1 Timothy 2:13, Paul sets the record straight: “Adam was formed first, then Eve.” And, according to Egyptian mythology, the man is deceived and not the woman. Women were actively engaged in propagating the Isis myth in which Isis deceives Ra (the most important god in Egyptian mythology) and usurps his authority to obtain power and greatness. After stating that man was created first, Paul says that, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived” (2:14). Again, it could be read as Paul setting the record straight about humanity's origin story.

If women were coming to the church from the cult of Artemis, it is not hard to imagine how they could end up assuming authority and might have taken to teaching others without seeing the need to receive instruction (1:7). Given the cultural context of the cult of Artemis, Paul's words could be read this way:

"Women must cease propagating the heresy that promoted the woman as the usurper of authority from man, the woman as the originator of man, and that man was the one deceived in the creation account." Paul's references to Adam being formed first and Eve being deceived serve as attempts to demythologize the Ephesians' creational worldview.

How does Paul's word choice of "authentain" provide clues that his concern is for the improper exercise of authority, rather than over women exercising authority?

The ESV translates 1 Timothy 2:12 as: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet." What we see rendered as exercise authority is the Greek word *authentain*. This is the sole use of this word within the entire New Testament, making it what is known as a hapax legomenon, or a word that appears only once in the Bible. When the New Testament speaks of authority, the Greek word *exousia* is the one typically used.

When Jesus says that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to him, the word used is *exousia* (Matthew 28:18). When Jesus gives his disciples authority over clean spirits and demons, the word is *exousia* (Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1). And, when Paul speaks of his authority, which comes from the Lord for building up the body of believers, the word is *exousia* (2 Cor. 10:8). Jesus does not have or give *authentain* to his disciples.

If we look at extra-biblical literature, we find that *authentain* carries a negative connotation and is more accurately translated as "bullying," "dominating," "controlling," or "forcing someone against his or her will." Early church father, John Chrysostom, used the word *authentain* when writing advice to husbands. He says, "do not play (or act) the part of a despot." With this perspective, Paul is concerned that a certain group of women are weaponizing false doctrine. Paul wants the false teaching and bullying to stop, and he wants the women, alongside the men, to learn the faith-- "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission" (v.11-12).

TAKEAWAYS

- Reading 1 Timothy 2:12 within the context of Paul's letter to Timothy and of the New Testament canon highlights first century concerns over false teaching (1 Tim 1:3) not that women are more susceptible to being deceived as a creational pattern (also 2 Cor 11:3). The appeal to Genesis is simply using a pattern to illustrate: as Eve was deceived so too are the women in Ephesus in danger of being deceived, and so should not teach until better informed on this matter, whatever it is.
- Reading 1 Timothy 2:12 within the historical and cultural context of Ephesus provides insight into the types of false teaching Paul sought to correct, a blend of Greek and Egyptian mythology. Women, coming out of the cult of Artemis, were likely weaponizing false doctrine. Paul wants the false teaching and domineering to stop.
- Reading 1 Timothy 2:12 within the context of the whole of Scripture and throughout the history of the church shows numerous, specific examples of women participating in a variety of leadership roles within the church.
- Examining Paul's word choice and the context of 1 Timothy 2:12, one can remain faithful to the text and conclude that Paul's intent was not to restrict women from ordination.

1 Corinthians 11:7-12

7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 It is for this reason that **a woman ought to have authority over her own head**, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

- It can be overlooked that the plain reading of v. 10 text says a woman ought to have authority over her own head and the context assumes women were prophesying.
- This is also one of the most confusing passages in Scripture.
- v. 12 points to the consistent theme of mutuality between men and women: in the Genesis account man existed alone and it was not good until woman was made from man's side, but now every man comes from a woman in birth. There is something the initial readers understood here that we don't, but Interdependence is being emphasized.
- TAKEAWAY: Paul's concern in the passage is not to restrict the public role of one sex or another in worship, but to stipulate that worship should be conducted in a manner that does not create public scandal to allow that both are interdependent on and need one another, not alienate one another.