

Title: That “awkward” thing that Paul says
Text: 1 Timothy 2.8-15
Theme: The role of men and women
Series: 1 Timothy
Prop Stmt: When men don’t do what they should do, women tend to do what they shouldn’t do because they feel as if they have no other choice.

Read Text:

“Can’t wait to hear you preach on this.” The women in my small group all threatened to sit on the front row with duct tape on their mouths. But, I love the fact that you read the text in anticipation of the sermon! I praise God for that! Now, I have several audiences in mind this morning. 1) Those who read this and think that Paul is demeaning women or worse, who think that the Bible does. 2) Those who dismiss this as something unique to Timothy and the church at Ephesus. Some of these from a more Pentecostal background believe that “calling” and “gifting” override Scripture. Some from a liberal theological background tend to play fast and loose with anything like this at all, and many evangelicals simply think that this doesn’t apply anymore, or doesn’t apply all the time. 3) My primary audience is our church. I want us to understand, celebrate and enjoy the roles that God has graciously given to the church.

My goal this morning is this. I want you to realize that this “awkward” thing that Paul writes is not awkward at all, but is a wonderful gift of God to the church that rightfully understood and applied helps us carry out the roles that God has given us in a way that puts his very personhood on display. God made us gender specific and he gave us roles that correspond to our gender. It’s really that simple. When we ignore that or reject that, we have problems. When men don’t do what they should do, women tend to do what they shouldn’t do because they feel as if they have no other choice. So, here’s my plan. 1) Answer the question: Why this is a big deal. 2) Explain why this is not demeaning to women. And 3) How we are to understand this text.

1. **This is a big deal.**

A. **Because gender roles are to reflect the Trinity.**

The issue of gender distinction and the different roles that God has assigned to men and women are not inherently cultural. They are theological. God made man and woman in his image. There is absolute equality between man and woman in their personhood, humanness, and standing before God. Both man and woman were made in the image of God. But, man and woman were made differently. In fact woman was made from man. If man and woman were made differently and both were made in the image of God, then the point is clear. Man was made to image God and reflect God in a way that is different than woman. She too was made to image God, but not in the same way that man is. This makes perfect sense when you understand that God is Trinity and this connection between the Trinity and gender is clearly established in 1 Corinthians 11.2-3.

Loving leadership glorifies God. The Father does this for the Son, for the Spirit and for the world. The Son does this for the Spirit and the church. The Spirit lovingly leads believers. When we lead in a loving way, we are reflecting the Father, Son and Spirit. This is what elders are to do for the members of their church. This is what fathers are to provide for their wives and children. This is what moms are to do for her children.

Humble submission also glorifies God. Humble submission glorifies God just as much as loving leadership glorifies God. The Son submits to the Father. The Spirit submits to the Father and the Son. The church is to submit to Christ. Members of the church are to submit to the elders. A wife is to submit to her husband. Children are to submit to their parents. Workers are to submit their bosses. This is what we are to do in attitude toward one another. When leadership leads lovingly, it encourages humble submission and both loving leadership and humble submission glorify God. When those two operate together, as they do in the Trinity, or in the same church and in a marriage it is a beautiful thing! This text is all about how loving leadership and humble submission work harmoniously together in the church. Let's go back to 1 Corinthians 11.2-3.

There are two ways that we need to see this:

God
Christ
Husband
Wife

Father	Husband
Christ	Wife

In Ephesians 5 the model looks like this:

Christ	Husband
Church	Wife

So, the husband is to lovingly lead his wife as the Father does the Son and as the Son does the church. The wife is to humbly follow her husband as Christ does to the Father and as the church does to Christ. The genders are God-given and God assigns specific roles to the genders because those distinct genders and roles display his glory. Women and Men are called to image God and are called at times to do it in similar ways. A man who is a boss at work, may submit himself to his leaders at church, and certainly to the government. A woman who is a boss at work, submits at home and at church. But, while there are times when men and women lead and there are times when men and women submit, there are also times when men have to lead and when women are not permitted to be authority. A woman is not the head of her husband, because Christ is not the head of the Father. A woman is not to be in authority over men in the church because God has called men to reflect him through loving leadership in the church and in the home, while women are called to reflect Christ through humble submission in the home and church. Guarding the doctrine of the Trinity guards the gospel.

B. Because this was part of the original sin in the garden.

The church is the new covenant people of God. We follow Christ, the 2nd Adam. We are called to learn from the failures of the 1st Adam. Adam and Eve did not live out their calling to image God. Adam failed to lead and he let Eve lead and he followed her. When he did not step up and step in and get between her and Satan and between her and the tree, all hell broke loose on creation. Here is the understatement of the year: Things do not go well in home or in the church when men do not provide loving leadership. Eve took the forbidden fruit, ate it and gave it to Adam who also ate it. When Adam sinned, the human race was condemned, not when Eve sinned, but when Adam sinned. Adam was the representative. Adam was made first. Adam was given the responsibility of being the head. Adam had the responsibility to name all of the animals because he was placed in charge of the earth by God. Then when Eve was made, Adam named her, because Adam was placed in charge. You name what is yours. Johnny and Robyn are having a boy. I told them I think he ought to be named Zwingli. Zwingli was a great reformer. I can't get them to go for it, and I have no authority to name their boy, because he is their boy. The fact that Adam named Eve is a big deal, but there is more to it. Together, Adam and Eve were intended to be a bi-unity, a one-flesh union of two persons that would mirror the Trinitarian image of God. That is why God said, "Let US make man in our image." Before sin came, Adam and Eve were perfect. Their perfection included gender distinction and specific roles. Adam was the head and Eve was his completer and God said that is was very good. When Adam failed to live out his calling as the leader and did not protect Eve from the lies of the Evil One, he sinned on behalf of every human who would follow him. The original sin came about because Adam did not lead and instead he followed Eve in her lead. He failed to man-up. Brothers, when we fail to man-up it puts women in a very vulnerable and precarious situation. We do not serve our wives well, or the women of the church well, when we do not lead well.

Keep in mind that this text in I Timothy has more to do with men than it does with women. Men are to take the lead in prayer (2.8) and men are to take the lead in the church (chapter 3). That is why this is a big deal. #2

2. Why this is not demeaning to women.

A. The Bible consistently calls men to honor women.

This is radical. It was radical in the OT days, the NT days and it is radical now. We tend to think that we have come a long way in women's rights. Women are news anchors, financial analysts, sports broadcast announcers, NASCAR driver, talk show hosts as well as Senators, Governors, and one ran for President. So, on the one hand, women have moved into positions that have in recent history been done by men, but, my opinion is that our culture does not truly esteem and treasure women. We pretend to esteem women, and in cases we may, but there is an underbelly in our culture that is so degrading to women. Put your finger on the pulse of our culture and you feel it. Stay at home moms are demeaned. Moms who choose to home school their children are often dismissed. But

the most serious evidence of how women are dishonored is the multi-billion dollar pornography industry. In the face of a world that has and continues to exploit women, whether through porn, radical Islamism, or private abuse, stands the Bible. Husbands are called to love their wives and esteem them, cherish them, learn them, understand them, know them, protect them, provide for them, care for them and if need be, die for them. This type of loving leadership for women is radical to this world. Men, let's esteem our wives and daughters. And women, be honorable. Support your man.

B. The Bible presents women as disciples of Christ.

They were not part of the 12 apostles, but they were considered to be his disciples, which was amazing. Jesus did something so, out of the box. He cared for women and did so privately and publicly. Women followed him and helped provide meals and provisions for him and the disciples. Jesus had a well-known friendship with Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary. Jesus stopped when the woman who needed healing touched him and cared for her. Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman and totally shocked her. But, Jesus did more than care for women. He expected women to be disciples.

I am going to ask you to do something. Look at verse 11 and read it. Is there anything in there that is sort of unusual? To us, yes. The part of a woman being quiet and submissive is, well, hard to explain in our culture. But, when this letter was read to the church in Ephesus, or anywhere else, many of the woman would be rather amazed and hugely encouraged to be told that they are to be fellow-learners. Let a woman learn! That was radical then. Some people accuse Paul of being anti-women. Are you kidding me? The vast majority of texts in the NT that address the positive role and influence of women is in the letters written by Paul. To accuse Paul of being demeaning to women is ignorant at best and intellectually and factually dishonest.

C. The Bible presents women as disciplers.

We will come to this later on when we get to Titus, but Paul tells Titus that part of his responsibility as a pastor is to get the older women of the church to disciple the younger women of the church. By the way, the older women in the church were probably in their 30's and 40's. (more on that in a few months) In private, Priscilla and Aquila disciplined Apollos in the Christian faith. Luke records that it was a team effort because Priscilla was part of that team. Praise God she was. She was not in a position of authority over him. She was not the preacher, but was functioning as a sister in Christ helping her husband and helping a man in private who became a brother follow Christ better.

D. The Bible calls upon women to be caregivers and helpers in the church.

Do not dismiss that. That is not a minor role. The role of women as mothers, provide hospitality, ministers of mercy is championed in the NT and so underrated in our culture.

In the early church there was a man named Philip who had 4 daughters who were unmarried. Luke says (Acts 21) that Paul was at Philip's house and Philip's daughters prophesied. The Word of God came to these girls and they spoke God's Word to Paul. This was not in a church service; it was in Philip's home. This was a fulfillment of Joel 2.28-29. These girls were used by the Lord to inform Paul of what was facing him when he got to Jerusalem. God could have revealed that directly to Paul, but he chose to use the girls. The entire tone of Paul's writings about women is characterized by esteem and care. So, we should seek to understand this text with that perspective. So, why does the Bible say that women are to keep silent in the church and what exactly does that mean?

3. **What does this text mean?**

My task is to help us understand all that this means. First, three general observations and then some specific ones.

A. **General observations**

1) **This is for all churches. (8)**

This is a cross-cultural text. This text has universal implications. This is not limited to one church in one place. This is how men are to function "in every place" (v.8) and how women are to do function as well. 3.14 makes it clear that this letter is not limited to one church in one place. In fact, this letter written to Timothy was not intended to be read only by Timothy. It was addressed to Timothy with the expectation that it would be read by the churches. The very end of the book is evidence of that. "Grace be with you." Immediately before our text, Paul says (v.7) "I am telling the truth, I am not lying, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." Why does he say that? If he is only writing with Timothy in mind, he would not need to convince Timothy that he is not lying, right? Timothy knows him better than about anyone. Of course Timothy knows that Paul is not lying. The idea that there is one God was understood by the Jews. But, the idea that there was one mediator who would reconcile all kinds of people to God (v.4) was stunning to the Jews. That is why Paul identifies himself as the teacher of the Gentiles. Do you hear what I hear now? This is not a narrow-minded bigoted text. God's mercy is wide. It is available for all kinds of people. This is good news. There is a universal appeal to this.

2) **This text is for the church gathering.**

Paul is addressing issues as they relate to when the church gathers together for worship and instruction (3.14). He is not addressing schools, governments, or business.

3) **This is a text that deals with heart issues. (8-9)**

- a. Men tend to be angry, manipulate others with their position and they tend to hesitate to lead spiritually.

Men who don't pray tend to be and get angry.

- b. Women are tempted to exploit their appearance, manipulate others with their skills and are tempted to usurp leadership.

On the whole, men need to be on guard about anger and women need to be mindful of modesty. The fact that men need to be on guard about their anger does not mean that women don't. And the fact that women need to be modest in their dress does not mean that men don't. But, the point remains that anger tends to be more problematic for men and dressing ostentatiously and provocatively tends to be more of a problem for women.

4) **This text gives role directions based on gender distinctions.**

Churches that fail to honor gender roles tend to fail to honor gender distinction. Do not get used to the offensiveness of same-sex marriage. The fault of this cultural tragedy lies with many of her churches.

B. Specific observations

So, when the church gathers together, here is what women are to do: (9-10)

- 1) They are to adorn themselves with modesty. (9)

Modesty is more than dressing in a provocative manner; it also has the idea of dressing for the purpose of trying to garner attention for the wrong reasons. We know from the contemporary literature of its time that elaborate hairstyles, ornate jewelry and extremely expensive clothes were an issue in the Ephesians culture. You can wear clothes in order to make a statement. For me, I tend to pick what is easiest to grab. But, if you dress in order to make a statement, what is the statement that you are trying to make? And, is that a statement that is pleasing to God and helpful and encouraging to the church?

For example, some of you dress simple and very casual because you do not want anyone to ever attend here and feel uncomfortable because they are not dressed up. You are very sensitive about that. Is that attitude pleasing to God? Sure. Is it encouraging and helpful to the church? Sure. Others of you dress up a bit more because it is a way for you to say that this gathering is important. You would dress up to meet a dignitary, so, you like to dress in a way that reflects the importance you place on us meeting together to hear from the Lord through his Word. Is that attitude pleasing to God? Sure. Is it helpful and encouraging to the church? Sure. Can you dress up in an effort to impress others? Yes. Is that pleasing to God and helpful to the church? No. Can you dress down in an effort to say that you place very little value on the church? Yes. Is that pleasing to God and helpful to the church? No. Paul is cautioning the women, when he says do not pursue being known by how you dress, but by how you are adorned with good works.

- 2) They are to be characterized by their good works. (10)

There is great wisdom in this. Ladies, here is a great question to ask yourself. Are you known more for your ministry in the lives of others, or for how you dress? A related issue is, are you known more for your ministry in the lives of others, or for being mouthy, and demanding and argumentative? Church, what do we want the women of our church to be known for? Is it, “the women there really know how to dress!” or “the women there really act like Jesus!”? That’s the point.

For many, many years, it was my habit to wear a tie, on Sunday morning, simply because it was a habit. I figured that if I wore the same clothes, it would be a non-issue. Then one day, a member of the church introduced me to her friend and said, “This is our pastor. He wears a tie every Sunday.” Now I’m imagining that written on my tombstone. “He wore a tie every Sunday.” The tie came off the next week. It is not what I want to be known for.

So, you understand. The issue that Paul is addressing is modesty and self-control. He is saying to the women to not go overboard as some of them were in the habit of doing with ridiculous styles and displays. He is not saying that there is something inherently evil about putting your hair in a braid, or wearing some jewelry or nice clothes. Do not dress in a way that makes it appear as if you are trying to make church about you. Instead, serve in a way that you understand that you are here to serve in such a way that it helps others look more like Jesus.

3) Women are to function in keeping with their role.

a. A woman is not permitted to teach men.

In the church, the role of teaching is for men because of the nature of what is being taught. The Word is authoritative and the person who is teaching the Word to the church is functioning in a position of authority. That is fine for a woman to teach other women. In fact, it is wonderful. But, it is out of order for a woman to be in a position of teaching a man in the church service because that position of teaching (preaching) is a position of authority. This would be very problematic for a woman to be in authority over her husband in the church. Women are to stay in their lane.

I have talked with ministry leaders who believe that it is okay for a woman to be an elder and to preach in the church. I ask them if they believe that is okay for a woman to be in charge of the home. They say no. But, the home is to be the little church. Marriage is an illustration of the church (Eph.5). The limiting of this position of leadership to men is protecting the roles that God assigned to the genders.

b. A woman is not permitted to be in authority over men.

This clearly precludes women from serving as elders, which is why in the very next chapter when Paul explains the qualifications for elders, he talks specifically about men and limits the office to men. This limiting is not a slap at woman; it practically forces the men to step up.

4) Here is why (13-15)

This prohibition is rooted in creation and is a consequence of the fall.

- a. Adam was formed first. God placed man in charge.
- b. Adam was not deceived, but the woman was. When she stepped out of her position, she got into trouble. The point is, don't keep doing that.
- c. This is not forever. She will be saved.

What does this mean? She will be saved through childbearing? Does having babies make you holy? Many mothers can say, "no"! Seriously, the context is about the fall. The woman was Eve and (15) she will be saved (passive – meaning she will be saved by the actions of another) through childbearing, which picks up the promise given to Eve in Genesis 3.15 of the Messiah to come. Eve will be saved through the bearing of the child, that is through the Messiah (who brings salvation) and this salvation is for all women. The evidence of their salvation will be seen in their continuing in faith, love, holiness and self-control. Women are to exercise good works, love holiness and self-control, as we will get into next week. Men are to lead and their leadership is rooted in the integrity of their lives.

When I was a kid, vacation was wonderful. I jumped into the car, took along a toy or two and went for a long ride to a neat place. Then I went home. I had no idea of the pressure that my dad was under to make sure the car was working right, that everything was packed, that we had enough money, that all of the details were taken care of. I just went along for the ride. His loving leadership freed me to have joy. Think of that in relationship to the church. The leadership of the church labors over this ministry. We care about the details being taken care of so that you can enjoy the ride. So many of you assume that water will be in the tank for baptism, that the lights will be on, that the heat will work, that the floors will be vacuumed and the bathrooms clean. You assume that the service will be planned, music prepared and a sermon delivered. You assume that teachers will show up, that lessons will be taught, that ministries will be organized and the bills will be paid. I want you to assume that. I want you to be confident in that. When the leadership is doing their job, we all can relax. This is ultimately a responsibility that God has entrusted to the men. Not because they are better, but because they are called to serve others by bearing this weight so that others can follow with joy. Because in the truly ultimate sense, this is what God does for us all, even for his Son, that he called to follow him, and he did, all the way to the cross, to the grave and is now at his right hand.