

Prayer

Misapplication of Jewelry Example, Authority, Etc.

1 Timothy 2-3

It is a commonly held belief by conservative Christians that 1 Timothy was written to tell us how we are to conduct ourselves or “run” the church. The reason for this belief is stated in the book itself.

*1 Tim 3:14-15 (NASB) I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that **you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.***

If we believe this, and with this in mind, some of the text should be reviewed to clarify some potential misapplication that may be seen in our church.

1 Tim 2:8 (NASB) Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

Commentary:

Men are to pray in church – without wrath or dissension, they must be righteous, that is have holy hands. We have seen the qualifying phrase before. (*James 5:16 ... The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*).

Just trying to second-guess, if women were to pray in the church why wouldn't 1 Tim 2:8 say “Therefore I want the **men and women** in every place to pray”, also Paul frequently used the word “brethren” which meant men and women, that word isn't used either, it seems very likely if the intent had been “men and women” the words would have reflected that, but they don't – and we will see why.

1 Tim 2:9-10 (NASB) Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.

Commentary:

Likewise – like what – like the mandates to men in the church, what will follow addresses the requirements for women in the church.

You will see the same parallel coming up – men are to pray, with an inner requirement of being righteous. Women are to dress modestly with an inner requirement of being godly.

Women are to adorn themselves with **proper clothing**.

Definition of proper clothing is: **modest and discreet**.

Counter example (possibly for the culture of the time) of non-modest and non-discrete is: braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments.

Notice the **subject** is **proper clothing**, the amplifying phrase is **modestly and discreetly** – no one would doubt the clear teaching that women in the church are to wear proper clothing, that which is modest and discreet. The overemphasis by some on the counter example does not negate the subject. It is true for all time, for all cultures, women in church are to dress modestly and discretely.

If you believe the counter example “not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments” is cultural, then with some risk you can assume that women in our culture, can wear braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments without violating the subject “dressing modestly and discreetly”. Even if you accept this premise, you cannot refute the specific subject – women in the church are to dress modestly and discretely – it always applies.

You can't say, “Well, if we want to be literally true, if we really want to follow scripture, then I guess women can't wear gold or pearls, because that's what scripture says.” Scripture does **not** teach that, it says women are to dress modestly and discretely, and then tries to amplify that by providing a specific (perhaps temporal) example of what is not modest and not discrete – the example is not the doctrine but a specific reference for clarification.

Getting back to the parallel part – not only external apparel is important, what's inside is important. “; *but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.*” We've heard this elsewhere. (*1 Pet 3:3-4 And let not your adornment be merely external-- braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.*)

Trying to pick apart a clear teaching, trying to say that this scripture is only cultural (because it contains a reference to jewelry and dress) so that you can reject other scripture that is more pointed, is very dangerous.

Getting back to the text and the likewise connector.

1 Tim 2:11-12 Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

Commentary:

I don't know how this could have been stated any clearer. We're talking about how to conduct oneself in the church. The subject is “let a women receive instruction”, the modifiers are “quietly” and “with entire submissiveness”. It says that women are to be instructed (“let a women receive”), but it makes certain the submissive attributes and the headship attributes required of women (stated at least directly in five books of the New Testament, Eph 5:22-23, 1 Tim 2:11, 1 Pet 3:1, Col 3:18, 1 Cor 11:3) are not violated. They are to **quietly** receive instruction and with **entire submissiveness**.

It goes on to say, women are **not to teach** “over” man, are **not to exercise authority** over man, but are to **remain quiet**. There are no cultural, relative terms used here such as “modest” in the previous text but there are some undefined terms used. There are no examples nor counter examples of “quiet”, no examples of “entire submissiveness” no examples of “teach”, no examples of “exercise authority”. The missing definitions of quiet, submissiveness, teach, and authority, are not justification to claim that this verse does not apply today. The only challenge in the church is to understand the terms, teach, exercise authority, and quiet.

Teach is easy, it has to do with the attempt to transfer doctrinal information for one person to another – women are not allowed to do this to a man. Exercise authority is a little more difficult, unless you understand the intended authority in the church. Quiet is somewhat difficult because we have already moved so far.

For a little perspective, let me remind you of a time when men and women were given the gift of prophecy to spread the Word since the New Testament had not yet been written. This gift was used in the church during worship to bring literally, the Word of God, to the congregation. Consistent with the teaching in Timothy and Peter this mandate is given in Corinthians:

1 Cor 14:29 (NASB) And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

*1 Cor 14:34 (NASB) Let the **women keep silent in the churches**; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is **improper for a woman to speak in church**.*

Not only were women prohibited from prophesying in church, **even if they had the supernatural gift**, they were prevented from questioning the other prophets, even if the questions were intended to qualify the legitimacy of the prophets or gain information for their own edification. This is consistent with 1 Tim 2:12 (remain quiet), it is consistent with headship and submission.

This should be considered in context with:

1 Cor 11:5 (NASB) But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved.

Women **were** to pray and they **were** to prophesy. For example they are required to teach younger women (Titus 2:3-4), and there were women prayer groups (Acts 16:13), study groups, etc., **but it was not to be done in the church**, they were **not to speak (1 Cor 14:34)**. Of course women were to pray in the church, led by men (1 Tim 2:8), silently as is done today in every Invocation, Benediction in our church but this is to be done with the same submissive spirit and refusing to wear a head covering in 1 Cor 11:5 was the

issue. This is not an example, not a license, for women to lead public pray in a worship service it would clearly violate 1 Cor 14:34, and those women even had the supernatural gift of prophecy and were commanded specifically to remain quiet. In case there is some authority ambiguity here is what comes next: *1 Cor 14:37 (NASB) If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment*, - makes it very clear, these are the Lord's commandments.

Broader Application

So then, how can we apply these teachings to the church today? Let's take a trivial example, can a woman baptize a man in a worship service? She would take the man into the water, she would tell the congregation that based on the man's acceptance of Christ, belief and confession of faith, she is now baptizing him in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (One of the purposes of public baptism is to teach, she would be explaining – teaching the prerequisites for baptism and probably even salvation- rise to walk in newness of life, etc.). This is already kind of tricky because she would be teaching, actually preaching to the congregation.

Additionally she would be doing this only because she had the right, the **authority**, as a Christian to baptize that man. All Christians were given authority by Christ to go unto all the nations, make disciples and baptize them, we are the “sent one”, the “ambassadors”, we were given the commission by Christ. We certainly don't think that a non-Christian could baptize a person do we. So she may be exercising her authority as a Christian over this non-Christian man to perform the baptism. This perspective might cause you a little concern, bring to your mind a little question about maybe this might violate the mandate of “women may not teach or exercise authority over man”. Would you want to crowd this close to the line of violating scripture, just so you could make the point that scripture does not explicitly state that a woman cannot baptize a man? If so, you are pretty brave.

So when it comes to this simple question of a woman baptizing a man in a worship service, it seems like we might in practice, violate both the teaching and exercising authority restrictions.

Justification for restriction

Getting back to 1 Tim 2:12 (*But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet*). If these clear words were not sufficient to exclude cultural concerns, we next find the reason for the mandate, and it is referenced all the way back to creation and the fall, long before there was “culture”.

1 Tim 2:13-14 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression.

Whether you like it or not, whether you agree on not, the reason given, is related to the order of creation and the order of the fall. If this teaching occurred in the Old Testament we might just say that the propitiation of Christ changed all this, but this **is** the teaching of the New Testament, fully aware of what Christ did.

Context

If you think this is not serious, doctrinal, trans-cultural material, look at what immediately follows this discussion. The very next chapter cover the fundamental teachings on the offices in the church.

1 Tim 3:1-7 Elder requirements

1 Tim 3:7-13 Deacon requirements

Final thoughts:

Just a few days ago I was listening to a member of our congregating saying, “Well, do we want to go back to women not being allowed to wear jewelry, how far are we going back?” This implies that we have somehow evolved from the outdated teaching of 1 Timothy to something better. I am convinced that this is related to the often used counter example of what was considered modest and discreet dress as if **it** was the **teaching** rather than a relevant example, of the definition of immodest.

As another example of this extreme, we have all heard, “I guess women should sing silently then?” Do we really believe that we can do **no better** in interpreting the commands for women to **not prophesy in church, not speak in church, not exercise authority over men and not teach men** - than that? I think we can do better. That is not the best that we can come up with to properly interpret this scripture that is authoritative, and meant to teach us *“how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth”*.

Greater care should probably be exercised in moving so close to the line of violating clear teachings of scripture.