

**BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #113:**  
**ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN PUBLIC CHURCH LIFE:**  
**A STUDY OF 1 TIMOTHY 2 (PART TWO)**  
By John Temples

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul gives some instructions governing the roles of men and women in various aspects of public Xn life. These instructions apply to public or group assemblies of the church for worship or Bible study, but not just such assemblies. In verses 1-8, he gives instructions to Christian men.

In verses 9-15, he turns to the women. The instructions he gives them also pertain to public gatherings of all kinds. Verses 9 and 10 deal with clothing. He mentions women's clothing specifically, but men need to heed these principles also.

Both the Bible and common sense suggest three main purposes of clothing:

- Adornment
- Protection from the elements
- Modesty

ADORNMENT (verse 9): The English word means embellishment or decoration, something that enhances beauty or makes one more attractive. The Greek root word is *kosmos*, meaning "a harmonious or orderly arrangement." The verb form is *kosmeo*, "to arrange, to put in order."

Some people have the idea that the Bible forbids Christians to wear anything purely for beauty (no jewelry, no bright colors, etc). But the Bible teaches otherwise. It teaches that adornment--making oneself look good--is a valid function of clothing. Revelation 21:2 pictures the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." In Exodus 28:2, God told Moses, "And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty."

So Paul is not forbidding the wearing of nice things, but in flaunting them--making them the focus of who we are. He is saying "don't turn the worship assembly into a

fashion show or a beauty contest. Let your real beauty be the true beauty of a godly life.”

So the first purpose of clothing is adornment. Second is PROTECTION FROM THE ELEMENTS. Not much explanation needed here. (We Floridians know to break out the sweaters when it dips below 70.)

MODESTY. The first part of verse 9 says, “in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation.” The word “modest” does not necessarily mean “covered from head to toe.” It really means “free from ostentation, not extreme, not drawing undue attention to oneself.” Another definition is “decent, orderly, in good taste.” Actually, it’s the same Greek word we noted earlier: *kosmos*, meaning “orderly and well arranged.” Adequate covering of the body would certainly be an element of that.

There’s another interesting word in verse 9: “propriety.” That’s the NKJV rendering. The KJV says “shamefacedness.” Our English word *propriety* means “conforming to conventionally accepted standards of dress or behavior.” Propriety is a good word, but I like “shamefacedness.” It’s closer to the meaning of the original word. So what does “shamefacedness” mean? Simply put, the ability to show shame in the face. In other words, to turn red with embarrassment if one is immodestly attired! A lot of people, both men and women, seem to have lost that ability.

Paul uses another word in verse 9 that I think is the key to the clothing issue: moderation. It means that in our dress, we should not go to one extreme or the other. We should not dress for shock value, or for sex appeal, or to deliberately offend people, or to make people wonder if there’s really a person under all that clothing! This is an area in which the church sorely needs the older women to teach the younger women.

So to review, the purposes of clothing are adornment, protection, and modesty. Actually, there’s a fourth reason people wear certain kinds of clothing: TO MAKE A STATEMENT. People dress in certain ways as an expression of status, personality, occupation, protest, or allurements. Genesis 38:14 says that Tamar, the widow of Judah’s son, put on seductive clothing to tempt Judah.

Listen to the description of an adulterous woman in Proverbs 7:6-10: "For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, In the black and dark night. And there a woman met him, with **the attire of a harlot**, and a crafty heart."

A lot of people, particularly young people, like to wear various fashions they see the rich and famous wearing. We need to tell Christian young people that that's all right up to a point; but if it sends a bad message, it's wrong. A few years ago a church member's daughter walked into the assembly wearing a miniskirt. The preacher said to her, "Honey, you really ought not to dress like that--you make people think lustful and wrong thoughts." She replied, "Oh, I'm not that kind of person--I'm just wearing this because my favorite entertainers do." The preacher said, "Well, if you are not advertising, *you ought to take down the sign.*"

We're reading in 1 Timothy 2 instructions governing the roles of men and women in various aspects of public Christian life. Now let's turn to verses 11-15, which deal with the place of women in God's order of service in the church. Verse 11 reads, "Let a woman learn in silence." Here again, the implication is that some kind of assembly or class is going on, not a private or individual Bible study.

## THE WORD "SILENCE"

Several modern versions say in verse 11 "in quietness." This is actually a better translation of the word. There are two main passages in the New Testament about women being silent, and there are two different Greek words. Here are the two passages:

- 1 Timothy 2:11--"Let a woman learn in silence [quietness] with all submission."
- 1 Corinthians 14:34--"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says."

The Greek word for silence in 1 Timothy 2:11 is *hesuchia*. It means not absolute silence, but quietness, peaceableness, humility. "Silence" is an unfortunate

translation, because it gives the impression women can never open their mouths in the assembly. Of course they can (singing, confessing Christ before baptism, making comments and asking questions in class, etc). Burton Coffman says of this passage: "The quietness in view here is that of due acceptance of authority, respect for God's rule of prohibiting women from taking over the public worship, and the quiet acceptance of their womanly role as child-bearers and mothers of the human race. Certainly, in the asking of questions in dialogue teaching situations, and in such things as the singing or responsive readings, women do not violate this passage by their participation in such things."

*Sige* is the root Greek word for "silent" or silence in 1 Corinthians 14:34. Unlike *hesuchia*, *sige* DOES MEAN absolute silence--not a peep. It's the same word used in 1 Corinthians 14:28, which tells tongue-speaking men to remain silent when there is no interpreter present. Why did Paul tell certain women not to make a sound in 1 Corinthians 14:34? Evidently some women in the Corinthian church--probably wives of prophets--were asserting themselves and trying to assume authority in the public assemblies. This assertiveness Paul put the brakes on very forcefully.

There's another controversial word in verse 11--"submission." That is a loaded or trigger word in today's culture. The Bible Exposition Commentary explains: "The word translated 'submission' in 1 Tim 2:11...literally means 'to rank under.' Anyone who has served in the armed forces knows that 'rank' has to do with order and authority, not with value or ability. A colonel is higher in rank than a private, but that does not necessarily mean that the colonel is a better man than the private. It only means that the colonel has a higher rank and, therefore, more authority."

In 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul spells out more clearly what he meant: "And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence."

As with verse 11, many people get all bent out of shape and accuse Paul of saying things he didn't say. He did not say a woman could not teach at all! Rather, he said she is not to teach men. Again, the Bible Exposition Commentary: "Women are permitted to teach. Older women should teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-4). Timothy was taught at home by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15). But in their teaching ministry, they must not [exercise authority over] men. There is nothing wrong with a godly woman instructing a man in private (Acts 18:24-28);

but she must not assume authority in the church and try to take the place of a man. She should exercise 'quietness' and help keep order in the church."

Under all dispensations, God has put the responsibility for spiritual leadership on qualified men. (1 Corinthians 11:3 says, "the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.") But men, instead of gloating over this power, we ought to tremble at the thought of the great weight of responsibility this places on us: to be the heads of our families and the leaders of the church.

A reasonable question is, why is it this way--that men are put in charge as spiritual leaders? Paul answers that in verses 13 and 14. Many people think, "Well, Paul was an old male chauvinist bachelor, and that's why he said this." Or, "Men were in charge in Greek and Roman culture; so it's just a cultural thing. Our cultures are different." No, Paul does not say "this is my opinion" or "this is the way we do it in the church." He gives two reasons, going all the way back to the creation and the fall: (1) Adam was made first, before Eve. (2) In the fall, Eve was deceived by Satan and succumbed. (Adam also sinned, but he did so with his eyes wide open--he was not deceived.)

Genesis 3 records the fall of Adam and Eve, and in verse 6 there are two small words often overlooked: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." The two often-overlooked words are "WITH HER." These words let us know that Adam was present when Eve gave in to the devil, and he did nothing to stop her. Adam should have been the spiritual leader, but he was not. Nevertheless, God subjected the woman to the man by decree, saying to Eve, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

Lest women feel that they are getting the short end of the stick in this, remember that the Bible plainly declares that men and women are equal in worth before God; both can obey the gospel and be saved; and both can work for God in the church. Godly women do have an important ministry in the local assembly, even though they are not called to be leaders of the church in a public capacity. Also, Paul speaks of a sphere of authority and self-fulfillment for women in 1 Timothy 2:15--"Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love,

and holiness with self-control.” Verse 15 is somewhat difficult. Is Paul saying that a woman must have children in order to go to heaven? Or that having a child guarantees a woman’s salvation? And in what sense is the word “saved” being used? In the eternal sense, or in the sense of being brought safely through childbirth? And why the change of pronouns from “she” to “they”? (“if they continue in faith, etc.)

Maybe we need to step back from the “paralysis of analysis” and look at the big picture. FIRST, it is certain that Paul does not mean every woman has to have a baby to be saved and go to heaven. All of us--both men and women--are saved by grace through obedient faith. SECOND, the context is talking about the different roles of men and women in God’s order, especially in the church. How do men please God and achieve ultimate fulfillment? By honoring their role as spiritual leaders, both in the home and in the church. How can women please God and achieve their ultimate fulfillment? By succeeding in their primary role as mothers and homemakers. But it is not wrong for women to be business persons (think of Lydia and the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31), and women can teach and help other women.

So the big picture is this: God’s divine order is for men to be the spiritual leaders and teachers; and for women to bear and raise children and be home-makers. (But AGAIN--it is not wrong for women to pursue careers, and they also can be teachers of children and other women.) So “she” (probably a reference to Eve primarily, but any descendant of Eve, any woman) who submits to God in His divine order shall fulfill her God-given mission, which is part of her salvation.

As for the last part of the verse (“if they continue in faith, etc.”), who are “they”? It is not likely a reference to children, because if a child leaves the faith, it does not mean the parent is lost. “They” probably means “women in general.” Even being the best wife/mother/homemaker in the world will not save a woman, unless “they” (a woman in particular or women in general) pursue the spiritual qualities Paul listed.

In many places in Scripture, and particularly here in 1 Timothy 2, God gives us guiding principles concerning our proper roles in life, in society, and in the church. He gives these principles for our happiness. Let us cheerfully submit to them.  
--John Temples

