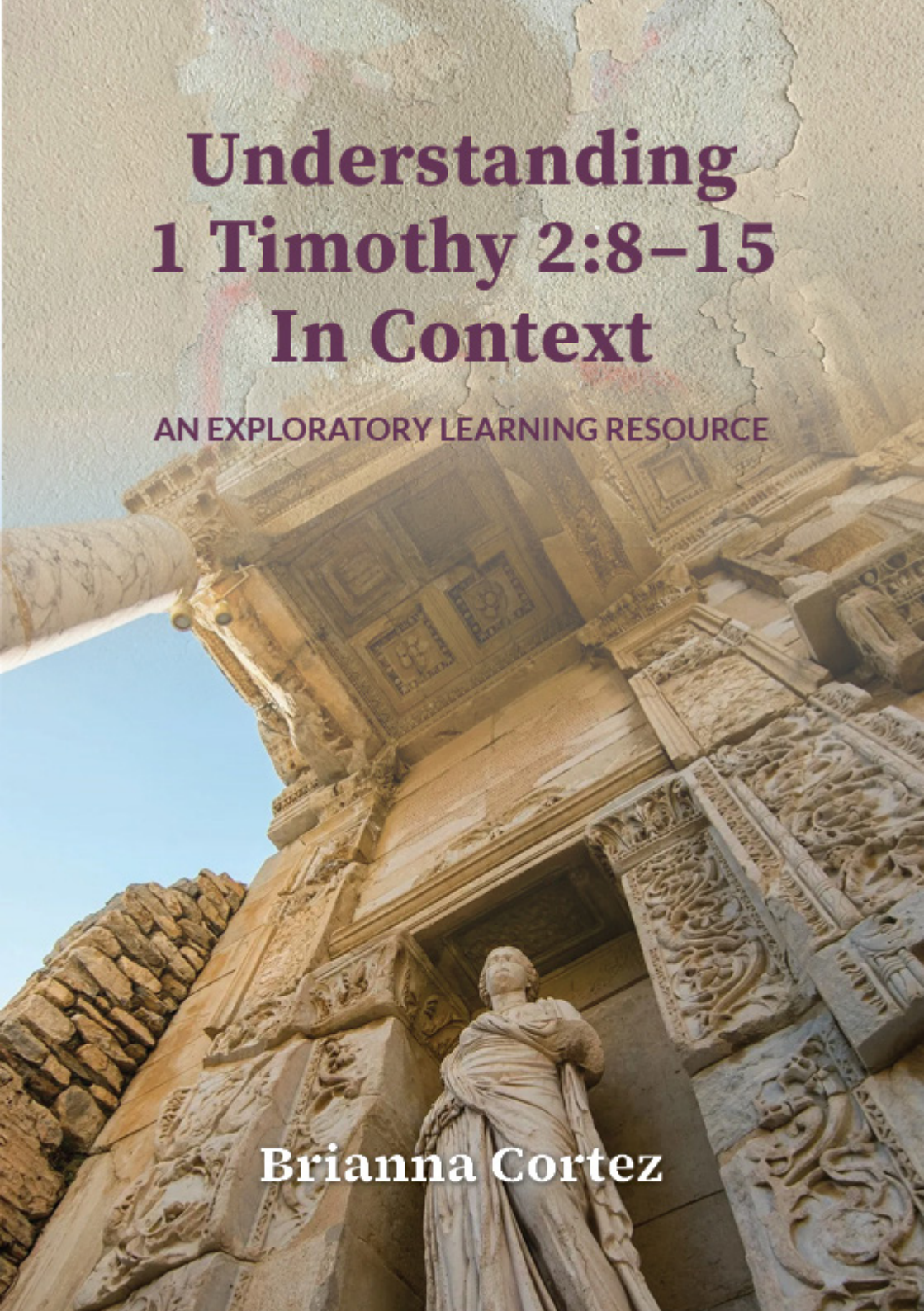


The background of the cover is a photograph of an ancient Greek temple facade, likely the Temple of Athena at Paestum. It features a large, ornate pediment with intricate carvings and a prominent statue of Athena in the center. The architecture is made of light-colored stone, and the sky is visible in the upper left corner.

# **Understanding 1 Timothy 2:8–15 In Context**

**AN EXPLORATORY LEARNING RESOURCE**

**Brianna Cortez**

# Understanding 1 Timothy 2:8–15 in Context

An Exploratory Learning Resource

*CBE International*



[cbeinternational.org](http://cbeinternational.org)

## Understanding 1 Timothy 2:8–15 in Context: An Exploratory Learning Resource

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# Introduction

Over the past decade, studying the Bible in context has been proven not only necessary for reading and understanding God's word but also essential for applying it in various situations today. It typically involves considering the surrounding biblical context, reading God's word within its context, and then applying it to our own context. When we examine the context of the Bible in comparison to our own today, we begin to ask questions like: Why, in a US context, do we pray with our hands folded and our heads bowed, rather than praying as Paul instructed the Ephesians to pray with their hands raised? When we encounter discrepancies in applying the Bible, most people understand that they may be due to cultural differences. We understand Paul's instructions to the church in Ephesus on how to pray may apply differently in other cultures, but the heart of what Paul wanted them to do—be at peace with one another and not argue—remains true even when people use other forms of prayer. Or what about how Paul instructs widows in Corinth to remain single (1 Cor. 7:8), whereas in Ephesus he instructs the younger widows to marry (1 Tim. 5:14)? The women in these churches had different struggles, and Paul gives different methods for both to preserve the Gospel; he is considerate of the context and that means being tuned into the needs of each congregation. So, while the form may change, God's purpose does not.

Questions like these have led many Bible scholars and church leaders to ask: Why does Paul limit women's leadership in the context of Ephesus, but encourage so many women in leadership elsewhere? 1 Timothy 2:11–12 remains one of the most frequently used passages to

prevent women from teaching or holding any position of authority in the church. However, it is also one of the most contested and difficult passages to translate and interpret in Scripture.<sup>1</sup> This resource explores the genre and context of 1 Timothy, Paul's reason for writing the letter, current challenges in translation and interpretation, and its applications for today. We encourage you to delve deeply into Scripture with us, exploring the world of Paul and the city of Ephesus, where Paul's letter to Timothy addresses a multitude of issues within the church there.

**In this resource<sup>2</sup> you will:**

- Understand 1 Timothy 2:8–15 in its historical and cultural context.
- Examine the challenges Paul and Timothy encountered in the Ephesian church.
- Briefly review current issues in translating 1 Timothy 2:8–15.
- Learn basic Greek words used in 1 Timothy 2:8–15 and how to compare Bible translations for better study.
- Learn about what women did in the early church as apostles, deacons, house church leaders, teachers, missionaries, and much more.
- Broaden your understanding of the ancient world of Paul with historical and archaeological examples (inscriptions, frescoes, statues, etc.).
- Review a wide variety of current resources on 1 Timothy, including articles, books, videos, podcasts, etc.

- Consider and reflect on relevant questions for how we interpret this passage today (i.e., Can a woman teach a man about the Bible? Can women be elders? What does it mean that a woman is “saved through childbearing?”).

Whether you are a pastor seeking resources on 1 Timothy in order to faithfully teach your congregation, a Bible study group going through 1 Timothy, or just searching for answers to your lingering questions on women in church leadership, this resource offers a concise and engaging overview of 1 Timothy 2:8–15 with thought-provoking exercises and reflections.

The following activities are included in this resource to enhance your learning:

## Going Deeper

In each section, “Going Deeper” activities introduce you to a variety of resources developed by CBE and others over the years, including podcasts, videos, blog posts, magazine articles, books, and academic papers. These provide you with in-depth insight into the topics you find most interesting.

## Reflect

The “Reflect” activities will have prompts to encourage you to process the material further. Consider writing down your responses to refer to them later.

## CHAPTER ONE

# The Historical Setting of 1 Timothy

# What is the historical setting of 1 Timothy?



Map of Ephesus. Image from Bible Mapper Atlas (c) 2026 by David P. Barrett

Paul, likely in Macedonia, writes to his closest coworker, Timothy, whom he left behind in Ephesus.<sup>3</sup> Ephesus was a port city located in the Roman province of Asia<sup>4</sup> in the richest region of the Roman Empire.<sup>5</sup> It was home to around 200,000 people.<sup>6</sup> The city worshiped the virgin goddess Artemis (Acts 19:28). Although Artemis was worshiped throughout Asia, her temple resided in Ephesus, where she was known as a protector of the city. Her temple was so extravagant that it was later considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Greco-Roman world.<sup>7</sup> Paul's home church (the house church of Priscilla and Aquila) was located in Ephesus for about three years.<sup>8</sup> There, Paul ran

into challenges with the cult of Artemis, which are outlined in Acts 19:23–28 and possibly in other places in Scripture (1 Cor. 15:32, 2 Tim. 4:14–17). In later sections, we will explore the cult of Artemis in more detail, but it is important to note that this is not a recent finding. Bible scholars have been commenting on the cult of Artemis’s influence on Paul’s ministry since AD 400.<sup>9</sup>

The “Going Deeper” section below includes videos and articles that provide more information on the importance of understanding Bible context and why, within this resource, we will spend a lot of time considering the context of Paul’s letter to Timothy.

## Going Deeper

[What You Risk by Reading a Text Without Context—Mikaela Bell](#)

[A Religion of “Women and Children”? A Christian Woman’s Place in the Greco-Roman World Before AD 300—William B. Bowes](#)





## *Reflect*

Compare your context to the Greco-Roman world. What similarities do you notice? What differences?

How might these similarities or differences impact your reading of the Bible?

## CHAPTER TWO

# The Genre of 1 Timothy

## What is the genre of 1 Timothy?

1 Timothy is a letter written by Paul to his trusted ministry coworker Timothy, possibly during his fourth missionary journey, after he was released from prison (Acts 28), around AD 66.<sup>10</sup> While most of Paul's letters are written to the churches throughout the Greco-Roman world, 1 Timothy is far more personal. Here, Paul instructs Timothy rather than the entire congregation.

Let's compare Paul's greeting to Timothy with a few of Paul's greetings in other letters:

### Exercise (5 Minutes)

Read and compare each letter introduction. Note any differences you find.

To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 1 Timothy 1:1

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:2–3

“To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. Thessalonians

1:1 “To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 1:7

To all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:1–2

To God’s holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:2

## See the difference?

Paul does not address the church in 1 Timothy. He is writing personally to Timothy, who is aware of the situation in Ephesus and likely has already received some instructions from Paul in person.

## What are the “Pastoral Epistles”?

1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are often given the title “Pastoral Epistles.” Similar in topic, style, and argumentation, the “Pastoral Epistles” were often circulated together in the early church.<sup>11</sup> But the term “Pastoral Epistles” is relatively new. It did not appear until the eighteenth century, and so it was not used by the early churches.<sup>12</sup> This title alone leads some churches to assume that the instructions in 1 Timothy should be applied as general guidelines for pastors in churches today. However, as we can see above, this is a letter from

Paul to his closest ministry associate, Timothy, to further inform him of the situation in Ephesus.

The letter includes specific instructions from Paul to Timothy on handling various problems in Ephesus. Some of these instructions differ from what Paul writes to other churches. For example, Paul tells the Corinthian widows to remain single (1 Cor. 7:8), but Paul tells Timothy to instruct the young Ephesian widows to marry (1 Tim. 5:14). Paul also encourages women to teach in other letters (Tit. 2:3) and encourages Priscilla who taught Apollos sound doctrine in Ephesus (Acts 18:26); whereas, in this letter to Timothy, Paul places limitations on women teaching. This leads us to ask: How should Paul's words be applied today? Should they be applied as a general rule for all churches? Or should they be used when the situation warrants?

## Exercise (15 Minutes)

Take a few minutes to read through 1 Timothy before continuing to the next section. Consider the following question: Why was Paul writing to Timothy? Note any specific concerns Paul had in mind. We have removed the headings and the verse numbers so that you can imagine you are reading Paul's letter as written.

## 1 Timothy (New International Version)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior

and of Christ Jesus our hope, To Timothy my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

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. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance

and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as

a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. 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, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

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. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. If anyone

does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great:

He appeared in the flesh,  
was vindicated by the Spirit,  
was seen by angels,

was preached among the nations,  
was believed on in the world,  
was taken up in glory.

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.

Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down

on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. Give the people these instructions, so that no one may be open to blame.

Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord's people, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to. So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.

If any woman who is a believer has widows in her care, she should continue to help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy

of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning. I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever.

All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God’s name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are devoted to the welfare of their slaves.

These are the things you are to teach and insist on. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our

Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time— God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith.

Grace be with you all.





## *Reflect*

How would you summarize Paul's reason for writing to Timothy?  
What problems are happening in the church of Ephesus?

## CHAPTER THREE

# Paul's Reason for Writing

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. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 1 Timothy 1:3–5

## Why was Paul writing to Timothy?

During the exercise, did you notice the major theme of Paul's letter? False teaching was so rampant in Ephesus that Paul urged Timothy to stay behind so he could direct certain people to stop teaching. Paul had previously warned the elders in Acts 18–20 that there would be false teachers among them. These false teachers were causing serious problems within the church by stirring up controversy, leading others into sin, and spreading false doctrine.

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 1 Tim. 1:12–14

Paul sees himself in these false teachers, as he was once someone who acted in violence because of ignorance and disbelief, but God showed him mercy. Paul believes that those who are ignorant can gain a good conscience and faith if they are shown mercy (1 Tim. 1:12–14).

## What was the false teaching?

Bible scholars do not agree on what may have entirely influenced the false teaching in Ephesus. As with many of Paul's letters, we are reading one side of the story, and much of what was exactly happening in Ephesus remains a mystery. But there are a few clues Paul leaves behind that may help us piece the puzzle together.

Paul has much to say about the false teachers throughout the letter. He says...

- They are teaching false doctrines. (1 Tim. 1:3)
- They are devoted to myths and endless genealogies. (1 Tim. 1:4). Paul later describes these as “godless myths” and “old wives’ tales.” (1 Tim. 4–7)
- They have departed from a good heart, conscience, and sincere faith and turned to meaningless talk. (1 Tim. 1:6)
- They want to be teachers of the law but do not know what they are talking about or confidently affirm. (1 Tim. 1:7)
- They are using the law improperly. (1 Tim. 1:8)
- Some are blaspheming. (1 Tim. 1:20)

- Some (women and men) have turned to Satan. (1 Tim. 1:20; 1 Tim. 5:15)
- They follow deceptive spirits and teachings from demons. (1 Tim. 4:1)
- They are hypocritical liars. (1 Tim. 4:2)
- They forbid people from marrying. (1 Tim. 4:3)
- They order them to abstain from certain foods. (1 Tim. 4:3)
- They are conceited and understand nothing. (1 Tim. 6:3)
- They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words. (1 Tim. 6:4)
- Their quarrels result in “envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, and constant friction between people of a corrupt mind.” (1 Tim. 6:4–5)
- They rob others of the truth and see godliness as a means to financial gain. (1 Tim. 6:5)
- They lead others astray by using their foolish desires and love for money against them. (1 Tim. 6:9–10)
- They turned to godless chatter and opposing ideas they falsely called knowledge, and in professing these ideas, they have departed from the faith. (1 Tim. 6:20–21)

Bible scholars speculate on what might have influenced the false teaching in Ephesus. We will take a look at this later, but for now, to understand what is happening in Ephesus keep in mind the things these false teachers are spreading. Consider the context of

the church in Ephesus: it was not a church where women and men were faithfully teaching God's word. It was a church that was being led astray by controversy, mythology, and false teachers, and Paul is writing to Timothy to put an end to it.

First of all, then, I ask that requests, prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving be made for all people. Pray for kings and everyone who is in authority so that we can live a quiet and peaceful life in complete godliness and dignity. This is right and it pleases God our savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the human Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a payment to set all people free. This was a testimony that was given at the right time. I was appointed to be a preacher and apostle of this testimony—I'm telling the truth and I'm not lying! I'm a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. Therefore, I want men to pray everywhere by lifting up hands that are holy, without anger or argument. In the same way, I want women to enhance their appearance with clothing that is modest and sensible, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes. They should make themselves attractive by doing good, which is appropriate for women who claim to honor God. 1 Timothy 2:1-10, CE



A third-century fresco from the catacombs of Priscilla called Velata. The fresco depicts scenes from a woman's life: the scene left showing a ceremony, the center showing the orans posture or "lifting of hands," and the right of her holding a child. Based on her clothing and the scenes, she was possibly an ordained priest or widow.<sup>13</sup> Image from <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/10353/the-cubiculum-of-the-veiled-woman/>

## Paul's Instructions for Men and Women in Ephesus

After summarizing the concern about false teachers, Paul tackles specific issues among Christians in Ephesus. He starts by asking them to pray for all people so that they might live quiet and peaceful lives with godliness and dignity. Then he gives instructions for how they should live this out. For the men, Paul wants them to pray standing, with their hands raised, rather than arguing with one another during prayer. This was a common form of prayer practiced by men and

women (as shown in the image above).<sup>14</sup> For the women, rather than showing off their wealth, he wants them to focus on doing good works and to dress humbly. Notice that although Paul speaks about issues concerning men and women in Ephesus, his instructions could apply to anyone. Paul would not want men or women to argue with one another during prayer or to dress in a manner that flaunted their wealth. His instructions fit the context for the current problems facing men and women in Ephesus to meet a common goal: for all people to live a quiet, peaceful, and godly life and fully know the truth. This is a common theme throughout the letter.

## Going Deeper

Is There Anything More that Can Be Said about 1 Timothy 2:8–15?  
“Propriety,” A Surprisingly Significant Word—Jim Reiher



////////////////////////////////////

## *Reflect*

Imagine if a private email you wrote to advise a trusted coworker on how to correct an extreme problem at your workplace was applied as a rule for all time and places. Would it have the outcome you intended?

# Pressing Questions In Bible Translation And Interpretation

Edited by  
J. K. O. Nwagwu

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## CHAPTER FOUR

**1 Timothy 2:11: “A woman must learn in quietness and full submission...”**

Over the centuries, 1 Timothy 2:11–12 has been seen as the final word on women teaching and exercising authority in the church. However, even those who view the passage as severely restricting women's leadership in the church struggle to apply the passage consistently. This is because there are a multitude of translation issues that continue to stump Bible scholars to this day. The next few sections will break down 1 Timothy 2:11–15 and the problems scholars run into when translating and interpreting this passage.

## **Exercise** (5 Minutes)

Read 1 Timothy 2:11–15 again in different Bible translations. In the following reflection section, write down any differences you find.

### **New International Version**

A woman must learn in quietness and full submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman who was deceived and fell into transgression. Women, however, will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

### **English Standard Version**

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not

permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

### **New Living Translation**

Women should learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result. But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.

### **King James Version**

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

### New American Standard Version

A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a wrongdoer. But women will be preserved through childbirth—if they continue in faith, love, and sanctity, with moderation.

### Common English Bible

A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a wrongdoer. But women will be preserved through childbirth—if they continue in faith, love, and sanctity, with moderation.



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## *Reflect*

What questions did you ask yourself while reading these varying translations? Consider writing down your questions before heading to the next section.

## In Quietness and Submission

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 Timothy 2:11

Paul's first command is to let the women learn (or the women must learn) in quietness and submission. Looking through our modern-day lens, we may jump straight to negative conclusions, assuming Paul is requiring women's subjugation and silence.

However, the idea that women should learn in the Greco-Roman context, where education was not easily available to most women, is radical. Many in the ancient world believed women were incapable of reason and of acquiring knowledge. Counterculturally, Paul not only sees women as capable of learning, but he also encourages them to learn. Paul's main concern is that women be theologically educated. This command could be seen not just for women but, indirectly, for the whole church through Timothy: "Let the women learn..." Therefore, Paul encouraged women to learn and expected qualified leaders to teach them the Scriptures.

The words "quietness" and "submission" may also seem negative to modern-day readers, but, contrary to our biases, they had positive connotations in Paul's time. Quietness was a desired virtue in the Roman world, especially for Christians. (Consider that Paul calls Christians to live a quiet life in 1 Timothy 2:2). In fact, the words Paul uses here—quiet (*hesychia*) and submissiveness (*hypotage*)—were

used to describe how a student, especially a student of the rabbinic law and Scripture, should learn.<sup>15</sup> In a culture that did not foster women's education and in a context where women were falling prey to false teaching, it makes sense that Paul would require women to learn as students. Paul urges the women deceived by false teaching to learn quietly and submit fully to sound teaching.<sup>16</sup> His hope is that they will come to full knowledge of and submission to the truth as he said just a few sentences prior... "that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:2-4).

## Going Deeper

What Did Paul Mean By "Silence" and "Submission" in 1 Timothy 2:11?—Cheri Dale





## *Reflect*

Has there been a time in your life when learning in silence and submission to sound teaching benefited your spiritual journey? What did you learn? How did it change you?

## CHAPTER FIVE

**1 Timothy 2:12: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man...”**

I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.” 1 Timothy 2:12, NIV

## Issues in Translation

After commanding to let the women learn, Paul writes that he is not permitting a woman to teach or domineer (*authentein*) a man. This verse is often used to restrict women from teaching or holding any position of authority over men, at all times and in all places. We should pause and carefully consider whether that is what Paul intended when he wrote to his coworker, Timothy, in Ephesus. Is Paul restraining women from teaching men for all time? Or is he responding to a specific situation to stop women from teaching false doctrine in Ephesus? Before answering these questions, there are a few translation issues we should address.

### “I do not permit...”

First, the phrase Paul uses here, “I do not permit,” *epitrepo*, is not an imperative or a command like “Let the women learn.” Paul uses the first person singular present indicative, which could be better translated as “I am not now permitting...” It indicates something that Paul is currently requiring.<sup>17</sup>

The word also indicates a *non-permanent* restraint on women teaching. Throughout the New Testament, the word *epitrepo* is most often used to give *temporary* permission for a specific circumstance.<sup>18</sup> See, for

example, Matthew 19:8, “Moses *permitted* you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning...” or Acts 24:23, “He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and *permit* his friends to take care of his needs.” It makes sense that Paul, after commanding women to learn, would stop them temporarily from teaching. They needed to be students first before they could become teachers. They needed to be like Priscilla, who spent years learning alongside Paul before teaching Apollos sound doctrine in Ephesus (Acts 18:24-26).

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“...or assume authority over a man...”

|                                                                           |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man...   | ESV |
| But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man... | KJV |
| I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man...        | CSB |
| I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man...     | NIV |

Second, the word Paul uses for authority, *authenteō* (αὐθεντέω), is one of the most debated words in Scripture. Bible translations vary widely in how to express the word in English: Is it to exercise authority, usurp authority, have authority, or assume authority? Each of these translations can have positive, negative, or even neutral connotations.

When translating words, scholars compare them to how those same words are used elsewhere in Scripture. The problem is that this is the only place in all of Scripture where *authenteō* is used. This brings many scholars to ask: Why did Paul use such a rare word? There are a multitude of common words Paul could have used to restrict women from having authority over men. Aída Besançon Spencer identifies twelve common words Paul could have used if he meant the general “authority” or some form of church leadership authority.<sup>19</sup> Let’s take a look at the words Paul could have used here if he were to lay down a

blanket law against women being in authority over men.

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|                |                                                                                         |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. archón:     | ruler, chief (a variation of the word is found 6 times in Paul's letters) <sup>20</sup> |
| 2. basileuó:   | to be king, reign (14)                                                                  |
| 3. archón      | lord, master (5)                                                                        |
| 4. episkopeó:  | to look upon, fig. to care for (4)                                                      |
| 5. epitassó:   | to arrange upon, i.e., to command (8)                                                   |
| 6. exousiazó:  | to exercise authority over (30)                                                         |
| 7. hégeomai:   | to lead, suppose (11)                                                                   |
| 8. huperechó:  | to hold above, to rise above, to be superior (6)                                        |
| 9. kurieuó:    | to be lord of, rule (6)                                                                 |
| 10. oiknomeó:  | to be a steward, to manage (11)                                                         |
| 11. oiknomeó:  | to be a steward, to manage (11)                                                         |
| 12. proistemi: | to lead (9) <sup>21</sup>                                                               |

As you can see, many of the other possible words for authority are found in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. So why does Paul use such a rare word for authority here? If he simply meant that women should not “have authority” over men, he would have used the most common word for “to have authority” (exousia). The meaning of *authenteō* may help us understand why Paul wanted these women to stop teaching.

## What is the meaning of *authenteō*?

Scholars offer a few possibilities for how to best understand the word, *authenteō*. The following section will cover three possibilities and consider how it impacts our interpretation of the passage.

## To “Domineer” or “Usurp Authority”

In the few instances in which it is used before Paul’s time, *authenteō* carries negative connotations. This is why some translate the word as “to domineer.” The Louw-Nida Lexicon of the New Testament, for example, defines *authenteō* as “to control in a domineering manner.”<sup>22</sup>

Cynthia Long Westfall, a New Testament and Greek scholar who has done rigorous study on the word, explains,

In the Greek corpus, the verb *αὐθεντέω* refers to a range of actions that are not restricted to murder or violence. However, the people who are the targets of these actions are harmed, forced against their will (compelled), or at least their self-interest is overridden, because the actions involve the imposition of the subject’s will over against the recipient’s will, ranging from dishonor to lethal force.<sup>23</sup>

Understanding *authenteō* as negative is not a “new” understanding of the Greek as some might suggest, either. The King James Version of the Bible originally translated *authenteō* in a negative sense as “usurp authority.”<sup>24</sup> Linda Belleville traces it back to the 1500s as being translated in a negative sense as usurp authority or domineer.<sup>25</sup>

Erasmus (1519) “usurp authority”

Geneva (1560) “usurp authority”

Webster (1833) “usurp authority”

Fenton (1917) “dominate”

Goodspeed (1923) “domineer”

Williams (1937) “domineering”<sup>26</sup>

If we translate *authenteō* as “domineer,” we can understand that this is not a type of authority Paul would want anyone, women or men, to have. After all, Jesus told his disciples,

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Matthew 20:25–28, NIV

See also the words of Peter to elders,

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but

being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:1–3, NIV

## To “assume authority”

Another possibility is that these women were assuming authority to teach. Philip Payne suggests that the word during Paul’s time meant, “to assume authority that one does not rightfully have.”<sup>27</sup> Given their wealth and social status in Ephesus, it is also possible that the women were assuming authority to teach men without having been trained or approved to do so.

## To “have authority”

To “have authority” seems the least likely option. It was not until the late 1800s that scholars began to understand *authenteō* as “have authority” in the positive sense.<sup>28</sup> Cynthia Westfall writes, “Glossing this verb merely as ‘having authority’ and then interpreting it as if it describes servant leadership or pastoral care is misleading in the extreme.”<sup>29</sup> But perhaps what makes this the least likely option is that Paul could have used the more common word for positive authority (*exousia*) if he did not permit the women in Ephesus to have blanket authority over men. If the term Paul chose, *authenteō* meant “have authority,” it would also contradict the majority of Paul’s other letters, in which he encourages women leaders in the church. For example, he urges women to seek the higher gifts of apostle, prophecy, and teaching (Rom. 12:31). He acknowledges women in leadership positions, such as Priscilla (the teacher), Phoebe (the deacon), and

Junia (the apostle).

## Going Deeper

Exegetical Fallacies in Interpreting 1 Timothy 2:11–15: Evaluating the text with contextual, lexical, grammatical, and cultural information—Linda L. Belleville.

Academic Study: Translating *αὐθεντέω* (*authenteō*) in 1 Timothy 2:12a—Jamin Hübner

## Is Paul restricting women from teaching men sound doctrine?

Now that we understand that Paul is not restricting women from exercising godly leadership over men, but from domineering or usurping authority, we should also consider what kind of teaching Paul is prohibiting. The word Paul uses is *didasko*, which means “to teach.” This leads many to assume that women should never teach men. However, this interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12 does not take into account the situation in Ephesus. It also does not consider Paul’s use of “I do not permit” and his command to “let the women learn.” For these reasons, Paul may have a specific form of teaching in mind that women in the church of Ephesus needed to learn. Nijay Gupta explains,

The language of *didasko* within a church setting tends to focus on passing on foundational apostolic tradition related to the

core truths of the gospel and the faith (1 Cor. 4:17; Gal. 1:12; Col. 2:7; 2 Thess. 2:15). In the context of what is happening in Ephesus, the prohibition of women “teaching” appears to be a concern with someone stepping in to pass on a new kind of apostolic teaching, or one that deviates from what is part of the tradition. Timothy was qualified to teach this tradition (1 Tim. 4:11; 6:1). Others were as well, as long as they had been properly trained (2 Tim. 2:2).<sup>30</sup>

The context tells us that these women did not know what they were talking about (1 Tim. 5:13). They were not trained to be teachers. Paul says later in the letter that the young widows in Ephesus were deceived, spreading nonsense from house to house, flaunting their wealth, and some had even fallen away to Satan (1 Tim. 5:11–15). Paul may have had these women in mind when he wrote, “Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm” (1 Tim. 1:6–7).

The situation was so dire that Paul had Timothy remain in Ephesus specifically to prevent certain people from teaching false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3). The women are the only people whom Paul clearly restricts from teaching in the letter. This is even more evident as Paul spends a lot of time addressing the issues surrounding women. Watch the video below before moving on to the next section. Notice how the descriptions of the young widows match those of the false teachers.

[How to Understand 1 Timothy 2? Context, Context, Context—](#)

Andrew Bartlett

## Going Deeper: More Translation Problems

There are many issues in translating this passage that we cannot explore fully in this resource. We hope you will explore these questions concerning Bible translation addressed in the articles below:

### Is 1 Timothy 2:12 “clear”?

Some still argue that 1 Timothy 2:12 is “clear.” The article below explores how Bible readers understand certain Scriptures as “clear,” its influence on how we interpret this passage, and what makes 1 Timothy 2:12 so difficult to understand.

[Revisiting the Clarity of Scripture in 1 Timothy 2:12—Jamin Hübner](#)

### One Action or Two Actions? “Woman” or “Wife”?

Paul’s use of the Greek *oude* (often translated as “or” or “nor”), which joins the two infinitives “to teach” and “to domineer,” has led scholars to ask if Paul is prohibiting one or two actions. It could be

that Paul is prohibiting women from teaching in a domineering manner or assuming the authority to teach. It could also be that Paul is prohibiting the women in Ephesus from teaching and domineering. Another issue is that the same word Paul uses for women and men can also be translated as 'wives' and 'husbands'. It could be that Paul's use of Adam and Eve in the following verses and the mention of childbirth suggest that he is speaking about a specific issue with a wife and her husband. Learn more by reading the article below.

[“Man and Woman” or “Husband and Wife” in 1 Timothy 2:8–15?—Philip B. Payne](#)

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## *Reflect*

Imagine your church has been led astray by false teaching. It is causing conflict throughout the congregation, and some have left the faith. How would you stop the spread of false teaching? How would you conduct yourself in a way that encouraged the peaceful life Paul speaks of?

## CHAPTER SIX

# What Influenced the False Teaching?

Now that we understand the crux of the problem in Ephesus was false teaching, it's important to discover where these false teachings may have arisen and why they would have impacted the Ephesian women in particular.



A third-century fresco from the catacombs of Priscilla called Velata. The Lady of Ephesus, no. 718, 1st century CE. Ephesus Archaeological Museum. [Image from Wikimedia Commons.](#)

But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Acts 19:34

## Possibility #1: Influence from Artemis

Artemis of the Ephesians was a virgin goddess. Like the Amazons, myths surrounding Artemis depict her as hunting down men before they could marry so that women would remain pure virgins.<sup>31</sup> Her followers were passionate about celibacy, so virgin women held high positions in the cult of Artemis as priestesses.<sup>32</sup> The Artemis cult's emphasis on celibacy could explain why women were being "forbidden to marry" in Ephesus (1 Tim. 2:12).



Fresco of the muse Clio in Ephesus House of Muses. Photo by P. Keller on Pexels.

She held the priesthood of Artemis as befits the holy

office, fulfilling both mysteries and sacrifices worthily; she crowned the temple and all its precincts on the splendid days consecrated to the goddess, organized public sacrifices, made distributions to the council and the gerousia [elders], [and] added five thousand denarii for repair of the basilica. — Dated 27 BCE/ca. 88 CE. An honorary inscription from the Byzantine baths.<sup>33</sup>

When women did have children in Ephesus, they prayed to Artemis to bring them safely through childbirth or to mercifully take their life in the process, using her arrows.<sup>34</sup> As a huntress skilled with bow and arrow, Artemis was often associated with animals and described as “the queen of beasts.”<sup>35</sup> Paul may be alluding to Artemis when he describes his encounter with wild beasts in 1 Corinthians 15:32, “If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained?” If we look closely at 1 Timothy and Paul’s other letters to the Ephesians, we find other indirect references to Artemis.

## Possible Allusions to Artemis in 1 Timothy

Artemis had many titles, such as “first throne, queen, lord, savior, god, and manifest.”<sup>36</sup> Sandra Glahn points out that many of these titles appear in the introduction of 1 Timothy, almost as if Paul is countering the false narratives right at the beginning of his letter. Artemis is referred to as queen, but Paul describes Jesus as “Eternal King” (1 Tim. 1:17); Artemis is described as “lord,” but Paul says “Christ Jesus

our Lord” (1 Tim.1:2); and most powerfully, where the Ephesians say Artemis is their savior and god, Paul says, “God our Savior” (1 Tim. 1:1).<sup>37</sup> Artemis was worshiped as the protector and savior of Ephesus.<sup>38</sup> So it is interesting that Paul refers to God as Savior when writing to the Ephesians (like in Eph. 5:23) and to Timothy, who is in Ephesus.

1  
Timothy  
1:1

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our **Savior** and of Christ Jesus our hope.”

1  
Timothy  
4:10

“That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.”

Even more than her ability to save, Artemis was known for her brutality—“one etymology for her name was ‘slaughterer, butcher.’”<sup>39</sup> Because of the rare use of *authenteō* and its violent origins, some scholars suggest that the cult of Artemis may have influenced women’s attitudes towards men. Spencer writes,

*Authenteō* might very well allude to the traditional destructive pagan feminine principle in Ephesus. If the women were actually killing men, Paul would have used a stronger verb than I am not permitting. Rather, he was using *authenteō* metaphorically to describe destructive attitudes of the women toward the men,

modeling themselves on Artemis, the ‘slaughterer,’ or, even on Eve, for, when she ate the fruit forbidden by God, it resulted in death (Gen 3:3–4).<sup>40</sup>

Andrew Bartlett also finds the word has connections to Artemis, especially to astrology and magic. The women may have been practicing magic (1 Tim. 5:13) and dabbling in astrology, and this could have been overpowering the men as well.

Paul’s choice of the astrological term *authenteō* looks deliberate. Paul could have used another word for ‘gain mastery,’ ‘dominate,’ or ‘overpower’ (Luke uses two other such words in Acts 19:16), but we may reasonably infer that *authenteō* was in Paul’s mind as a particularly appropriate word because of its use in the false traditions of astrology. This becomes apparent when we set his choice of the word, unique in the Bible, alongside relevant features of the context and the available information in 1 Timothy about the nature of false teachings at Ephesus. We may note especially (1) Paul’s use of vocabulary in 1 Timothy 5:13–14 that is quite unusual in the context of Christian instruction (*argos*, *perieros*, *oikodespoteo*), sounding multiple echoes of the language of astrology and magic; (2) the association of Ephesian Artemis with both astrology and magic; (3) the known history from Acts 19 of demons, magic, and the burning of books of forbidden knowledge in Ephesus; and (4) Paul’s instructions in Ephesians 6 about spiritual warfare against the unseen forces of evil.<sup>41</sup>

Ephesus was the center of magic in the ancient world, so it is no surprise that the Ephesian widows may have been dabbling in magic.<sup>42</sup> The New Testament gives further evidence to this. In Acts, we find that Christians in Ephesus have been practicing magic and Paul has them burn their magic scrolls.

When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power (Acts 19:18–20).

For many in the city, Artemis's temple was also a major source of income. (Many worshipers resulted in many donations). It was known as one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, Paul's ministry was a hindrance not only to the cult of Artemis, but to the economy that was built upon pagan practices such as the selling of idols and magic scrolls. This is why there was an uproar in Ephesus.

A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: "You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led

astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty. When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” (Acts 19:24–28)

Overall, if we look at the false teachings throughout Paul’s letter to Timothy: old myths and endless genealogies, an emphasis on wealth, forbidding people to marry, a concern with childbirth, widows practicing magic and talking nonsense, it is very possible, even likely, that the cult of Artemis could be the culprit behind the false teachings in Ephesus.

## Going Deeper

[Artemis of the Ephesians in First-Century Ephesus and  
Ramifications for How We Read 1 Timothy—Sandra Glahn](#)

## Possibility #2: “New Roman Woman”

Still, some scholars like Bruce Winter have offered another theory as to why there were serious problems with women in Ephesus. The “New Roman Woman” view examines historical and ancient writings to understand how women were perceived by men during the time.

For example, authors like Cicero and Plutarch expressed a growing concern for preserving women's modesty. The theory is that when women gained more freedom and wealth, they became more sexually immoral.<sup>44</sup> Wealthy women, in particular, dressed in the latest fashions and courted young men. So much so, that Caesar Augustus became worried about adultery and instilled new laws that made marriage a requirement.<sup>45</sup>

An uptick in wealthy and immodest women could explain Paul's concerns with the women showing off their wealth, and his urging them to put on good works. Winter also suggests that these women in Ephesus may have wanted to dominate men in the same way "new women" were domineering men in the Forum and courts.<sup>46</sup> Winter provides a lot of evidence for his theory with quotes from men discussing these new women. For example, Plutarch's comments on Fulvia: "She was a woman who gave no thought to spinning or housekeeping, nor did she consider it worthwhile to dominate a man not in public life. She wished to rule, a ruler and command, a commander."<sup>47</sup> If women were indeed domineering and teaching men in the public sphere, showing off their wealth, and even acting promiscuously, it would make sense that Paul would instruct women not to do these things in order to preserve the Gospel. Or as he says to the young widows: give the enemy no opportunity for slander.

This theory, however, does not fully explain the influx of false teaching and old myths. Despite this, both the influence of Artemis and the social environment of the time may have contributed to the issues in Ephesus. Either way, neither theory perfectly resolves all

the problems addressed in Paul's letter to Timothy, so it is important to keep an open mind and hold these theories loosely.

## Going Deeper

Paul's Concern for Ephesus: A Survey of 1 Timothy 2:8–15—Eliza Stiles



## *Reflect*

Consider the previous sections on Bible translation issues in 1 Timothy 2:11–12. Did you learn anything you did not know before? How might it impact your view of this passage moving forward?

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# 1 Timothy 2:13–14: The Story of Adam and Eve

For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 1 Timothy 2:13–14

After restricting women usurping authority to teach men, Paul turns to the story of Adam and Eve in the garden. Some argue that Paul uses the story of Adam and Eve to instill a “creation order” of men over women. However, within the context, the passage may be better understood as an example forewarning the women teaching false doctrine in Ephesus rather than a defense for male authority as God’s design. Another possibility is that Paul was correcting a false narrative spreading within Ephesus that woman was created before man. Below, we will briefly discuss both possibilities.

## **Possibility #1: An Illustration from the Garden**

Throughout his letters, Paul often uses Old Testament illustrations to offer fresh insights into the current struggles of congregations, much as pastors use illustrations in their sermons today. After temporarily stopping the deceived women from teaching, Paul uses the illustration of Adam and Eve in the garden to show what happens when a deceived person instructs another: they both fall into sin and depart from the truth. This illustration would have had a great impact on the women in Ephesus who were being led astray and domineering men with false doctrines. It would give further explanation as to why Paul would take such drastic measures to stop the false teaching in

the church. Spencer writes,

Paul explains his earlier sentence with an illustration (2:11–12): For Adam first was formed, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived, but the woman, having been deceived, came to a state of transgression (2:13–14). Paul’s illustration is an “analogy” (a form of reasoning in which one thing is inferred to be similar to another thing in a certain respect, on the basis of the known similarity between the things in other respects). Adam and Eve both were humans formed by God, but they sinned. Eve, being deceived, affected herself and others. Paul’s technique is not unlike the rabbis who used analogies to make the Old Testament relevant to present and on-going circumstances.<sup>48</sup>

The Ephesian women were sinning in ignorance because they did not know what they were talking about and had been deceived like Eve, so Paul’s solution is that they should learn. Notice that Paul handed the men who continued to spread false knowledge over to Satan (1 Tim. 1:20). They knew better. But for the women, Paul instructs them to learn in silence and submission because he believes that if shown mercy, they can come to a full understanding of the truth.

It should be noted that Paul does not see women as being more easily deceived. Paul believes that anyone can be deceived. He himself was deceived by sin (Rom. 7:11).<sup>49</sup> He uses Eve’s deception as an example for all Christians who fall astray to false doctrine (2 Cor. 11:13). The

women in Ephesus were the primary ones being preyed upon by false teachers (2 Tim. 3:6–9), and so, Paul uses Eve as an example for them as well.

## Possibility #2: A Competing Creation Narrative

Another possibility is that there was a competing creation narrative in Ephesus, one that held that woman was created before man. Sandra Glahn explains how this could be possible: “In the Ephesian origin story, Artemis is first; it’s one of her titles. In her own creation story, with its female-male pairing, she is the firstborn.”<sup>50</sup> Paul could be writing to refute the myth in Ephesus that put Artemis as the “firstborn” and “savior” above Christ. If this is true, Paul sets the record straight. Adam was first, then Eve. Eve was the one who was deceived, not Adam. This would have an equalizing impact on the women in Ephesus who were domineering over the men and would show that God is the true Savior, not Artemis. It would further encourage the women to humble themselves and learn sound doctrine, and stop false narratives from spreading in Ephesus.

## Going Deeper

On Paul’s Use of Creation Narratives—John Jefferson Davis

First Timothy 2:12, the Ordination of Women, and Paul’s Use of Creation Narratives—John Jefferson Davis

Overall, we should pay close attention to Paul's example of Eve and Adam. This is not an example of a woman who faithfully taught a man the word of God like Priscilla, but of a woman (Eve) who was deceived (by the serpent) and led a man (Adam) into sin, like the women in Ephesus. Andrew Bartlett sums it up like this: "It makes excellent sense that Paul goes on to underline what he says in verses 11:12 by referring back to the first spiritual battle in Scripture, where a young woman, deceived by the satan, taught and authented a man, with dire results."<sup>51</sup>

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## *Reflect*

Do you understand Paul's use of the creation story as an example (a description) or as a model to follow (a prescription)? How does this impact your views of women and men in ministry?

## CHAPTER EIGHT

**1 Timothy 2:15: “saved  
through childbearing.”**

But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. 1 Timothy 2:15

## Why is Paul concerned about childbearing?

Most who say “1 Timothy 2:12 is clear” do not take into consideration 1 Timothy 2:15. If we are to consider 1 Timothy 2:12 as a blanket rule restricting women from leading or teaching men, 1 Timothy 2:15 creates a multitude of problems. How do we understand “they will be saved through the childbearing” when applying 1 Timothy 2 today? Should we understand it to mean that women’s salvation is dependent upon their ability to have children? Why is Paul talking about childbirth in the midst of a discussion on “church leadership”?



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But women's nature tends to show  
a lack of balance—in childbirth  
a sense of wretched helplessness  
combined with utter folly.  
Those feelings pierce my womb, as well,  
but I call out to Artemis,  
guardian goddess of the bow,  
who eases all our labor pains.  
She never fails to visit me—gods be thanked—and is most  
welcome!”

*Euripides*, ca. 480—ca. 406 BCE<sup>52</sup>

## Option 1: Saved through Childbirth

In the Greco-Roman world, women dying during childbirth was frighteningly common.<sup>53</sup> Who were women to go to in childbirth other than Artemis, the goddess of midwifery? Women would pray to Artemis during childbirth to ease their pains or to give them a quick death.<sup>54</sup> The false teachers in Ephesus, if they were influenced by the cult of Artemis, may have been preying on women's fear of childbirth. But Paul has mercy on these women who have been deceived. He ties into the story of Adam and Eve to show that these deceived women, like Eve, if they continue in faith, love, and propriety, will be saved through painful childbirth. It is through their faith in Jesus Christ, who has the real power to save.

Sandra Glahn explains,

How interesting that Paul brings up deliverance through childbirth in a context where false teaching is likely coming from the cult of the goddess of midwifery—especially because he is bringing a creation story to counter beliefs in a city that prides itself in its goddess's birth. Eve's consequence was pain in childbearing. Artemis was thought to deliver painlessly or euthanize women in childbirth. But Jesus is better. He will save through childbearing those who continue in faith, love, and holiness with self-control.<sup>55</sup>

Bruce Winter argues similarly (although he does not consider the influence coming from Artemis, but from the new Roman women) that some women may have wanted to terminate their pregnancy to avoid childbearing due to their disdain for pregnancy and how

it transformed their bodies (men also disliked pregnant women's bodies).<sup>56</sup> In this case, Paul encourages women to bear children in faith that God will sustain them.

## Option 2: Saved through *The Childbearing*

Paul may also be referring to the birth of Jesus Christ in this passage. Scholars who interpret this passage as referring to the childbearing of Jesus see Paul as reflecting on Genesis 3, where God promises that Eve's offspring will crush Satan (Gen. 3:15). Philip Payne explains, "This sentence does not teach that 'women should stay home and make babies.' It is best translated, 'But anyone will be saved through the birth of Jesus if they continue in faith, love and holiness with self-control.'"<sup>57</sup> Andrew Bartlett and Aída Besançon Spencer also see this interpretation as the most probable because Paul uses "to save" (sózó) in a spiritual sense throughout his letters.<sup>58</sup> Bartlett and Spencer also argue that Paul has Artemis in mind when writing to Timothy. As Bartlett explains,

Timothy is well aware that the next verse (Gen. 3:16) refers to women's pain in childbirth. Paul casts a sidelong glance at the Artemis cult's belief that the goddess would keep mothers safe during childbearing. In Paul's gospel there is an even more important kind of safety for women, by means of a particular event of childbearing, which is the salvation found in following Christ with faith, love, holiness, and self-control.<sup>59</sup>

## Going Deeper

Short Answers to Tough Questions: What does Paul mean when he writes that women will be saved through childbearing (1 Tim. 2:15)?—Jeff Miller

Saved Through Childbearing: 1 Timothy 2:15 as a Hermeneutical Caveat—Jeff Miller

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## *Reflect*

How have you read 1 Timothy 2:11–12 up to this point? Did you consider the following verses 1 Timothy 2:13–15? If so, how did you interpret them? What do you think now?

## CHAPTER NINE

**1 Timothy 3: “If anyone desires to be an overseer, they desire a noble task...”**

## Exercise (5 Minutes)

Read 1 Timothy 3:1–13 in different Bible translations. Note any differences you find.

### New International Version

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon

must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

### Common English Bible

This saying is reliable: if anyone has a goal to be a supervisor in the church, they want a good thing. So the church's supervisor must be without fault. They should be faithful to their spouse, sober, modest, and honest. They should show hospitality and be skilled at teaching. They shouldn't be addicted to alcohol or be a bully. Instead, they should be gentle, peaceable, and not greedy. They should manage their own household well—they should see that their children are obedient with complete respect, because if they don't know how to manage their own household, how can they take care of God's church? They shouldn't be new believers so that they won't become proud and fall under the devil's spell. They should also have a good reputation with those outside the church so that they won't be embarrassed and fall into the devil's trap.

In the same way, servants in the church should be dignified, not two-faced, heavy drinkers, or greedy for money. They should hold on to the faith that has been revealed with a clear conscience. They should also be tested and then serve if they are without fault. In the same way, women who are servants

in the church should be dignified and not gossip. They should be sober and faithful in everything they do. Servants must be faithful to their spouse and manage their children and their own households well. Those who have served well gain a good standing and considerable confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

## What do you think?

Did you spot any major differences in translation?

### “If anyone”

Paul begins the sentence like this, “The word is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to overseeing, (s)he desires a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1).<sup>60</sup> Paul’s use of the word *tis* (anyone) shows that he has women and men in mind as possible overseers, although the women in Ephesus were not ready yet. What makes this even more apparent is if we look at Paul’s instructions to women: Paul wants women to do good works (1 Tim. 5:10) and to adorn themselves with good works (1 Tim. 2:10). Desiring to be an overseer would be desiring a “good work” for women and men.

### “One woman-man”

Did you notice the male pronouns throughout the first translation and the lack thereof in the second one? After saying anyone who

aspires to be an overseer seeks a good work, Paul lays out a list of Christian characteristics overseers should have. It is within only one of the characteristics that Paul uses a male pronoun (“husband of one wife” or literally “one woman-man”). The rest of the characteristics Paul lists are considered gender neutral. Therefore, translators have added in male pronouns throughout 1 Timothy 3 that do not exist in the original Greek due to this phrase “one woman-man.” But does the phrase “one woman-man” exclude women from being elders?

The phrase “one woman-man” (*mias gynaikos andra*) is an idiom often translated as “husband of one wife,” but may be better translated as “faithful to one’s spouse.”<sup>61</sup> In Greek, masculine words are often used when the text applies to everyone.<sup>62</sup> This can make it difficult to understand when words apply only to men, unless words addressed only to women are used. But Paul is clear here by his use of *tis* (if anyone). He has men and women in mind! In fact, within the next paragraph, Paul addresses women deacons<sup>63</sup> and then says deacons must also be “one-women-men” (1 Tim. 3:12). This further proves that Paul’s use of “one-women-men” also applies to women. Phoebe, as a deacon, would have been expected to be faithful to her spouse (if she had one). Even prominent complementarian Bible scholars like Douglas Moo and Thomas Schreiner agree that the idiom “one-man-woman” does not exclude women from being overseers.<sup>64</sup> It should be noted that this does not necessarily mean that elders and deacons must be currently married. Paul also uses this phrase for older widows. He says the older widows must be “one-man-women” (1 Tim. 5:9). That is, they should be chaste.

The following instructions for elders could also apply to both women and men. Aída Besançon Spencer compares the ESV translation, which inserts male pronouns, to a literal Greek translation, which does not.

- “he must manage his own household” (ESV) vs. “the own house well managing”
- “his children” (ESV) vs. “having children”
- “his own household... he care” (ESV) vs. “the own household... take care”<sup>65</sup>

Though Paul did not support women overseers in Ephesus because they did not meet the requirements (they needed to learn before they could teach), he may have had them in mind for the future if they continued in faith, holiness, wisdom, and godliness. Paul may have wanted these women to aspire to be overseers. Ian Paul and Andrew Bartlett list all the requirements Paul expected of elders, which Paul also expected of women throughout 1 Timothy and Titus. They write,

With just one seeming exception, all the behaviours and criteria which Paul then sets out are capable of being true of women. Whether instinctively or deliberately, Paul reinforces the message that women may have the necessary qualifications for eldership. He does this by using the same or similar Greek words and ideas when he writes elsewhere in 1 Timothy and Titus about women. Running through the list in 1 Timothy:

- Eldership is a good work (3:1); Paul expects women to do good work (5:10).
- Elders must be above reproach (3:2); Paul expects women to be irreproachable (5:7).
- Elders must be temperate (3:2); Paul expects women to be temperate (3:11).
- Elders must be self-controlled (3:2); Paul expects women to be self-controlled (2:9, 15).
- Elders must be respectable (3:2); Paul expects women to be respectable (2:9).
- Elders must be hospitable (3:2); Paul expects women to be hospitable (5:10).
- Elders must be able to teach (3:2); Paul expects women to be teachers of what is good (Titus 2:3).
- Elders must not be drunkards (3:3); Paul expects women not to be drunkards (Titus 2:3).
- Elders must not be lovers of money (3:3); Paul expects women to avoid adornment with gold, pearls and expensive clothes (2:9).
- Elders must be good managers of their households (3:4); Paul expects women to rule their households (using a word which is a compound of the strong term *despote*<sup>2</sup>) (5:14).
- Elders must show dignity in the way they keep their children under control (3:4); Paul expects women to show dignity (3:11).
- Elders must not be new converts, falling into condemnation on account of pride (3:6).

- Paul expects women to be humble and not under condemnation (5:10, 12).
- Elders must have a good testimony from outsiders (3:7); Paul expects women to have a good testimony from others (5:7, 10).

Paul also includes a group of further qualifications: gentle, not violent (contrast 1:13), and not quarrelsome (3:3). It is uncontroversial that these may be found in women. Thus, Paul has listed at least sixteen qualities or behaviours which may certainly be found in both men and women. He appears to regard women as capable of satisfying the qualifications.<sup>66</sup>

Although the women in Ephesus were deceived and unable to teach or serve as overseers at the time Paul wrote his letter to Timothy, Paul does not devalue women as incapable of becoming overseers or teachers. After all, Priscilla taught Apollos sound doctrine (Acts 18:26). Paul commends many women church leaders, such as Junia (the apostle), Euodia and Syntyche (church leaders in Philippi), and Nympha (church leader in Laodicea), to name a few; many of whom could have become or been overseers.

## Going Deeper

Watch the videos below to learn more about Paul's understanding of church leadership and women in the early church.

[What's in a name...or a title?—Cynthia Westfall](#)

## Is there evidence for women elders or overseers in the early church?

### “Older women” or “female elders”?

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Titus 2:1–5

Philip Payne and others have proposed that Paul’s words to “older women” in Titus 2 could also be translated as female elders.<sup>67</sup> There is evidence outside of the Bible for this as well. The word Paul uses for older women in Titus 2 (*presbytidas*) was used in other historical Christian documents to refer to the position of “female elder.”<sup>68</sup> The word can mean an older woman or the position of female elder depending on the context.

## Women householders as overseers?

Nijay K. Gupta makes the case that in the early church, householders would have naturally been considered overseers, as they were experienced managers. Reflecting on Roger Gehring's work, he writes,

It would be natural for a *paterfamilias*, a house holder, to become the *episkopos* of the church community. Just as they gave oversight and leadership to their house (as a kind of small business or mini-corporation), so they would be set up to "manage" the church as a spiritual family. This makes sense in light of Paul's instruction that overseers of the church must be competent household managers (1 Tim. 3:4).<sup>69</sup>

While householders were mostly men, Gupta points out that in some parts of the Roman world, up to twenty-five percent of householders could have been women.<sup>70</sup> In fact, in the New Testament we find several women householders (Lydia, Acts 16:14–15; Mary the mother of John, Acts 12:12; Chloe, 1 Cor. 1:11; Nympha, Col. 4:15; and possibly the elect lady, 2 John 1:1). If the structure of the early church was centered around house churches, women householders like Lydia would have naturally been the overseers of the church in their household.

## Early Christian Art

Christian art from the third and early fourth centuries also depicts

women in church leadership. In her book, *Crispina and Her Sisters: Women and Authority in Early Christianity*, Sister Christine Schenk documents women depicted with authority in early Christian sarcophagi and catacomb frescos. Her findings show that women were depicted in Christian art as being ordained, preaching from Scripture, leading communion, and more.

# Putting It All Together

## CHAPTER TEN

**Is 1 Timothy 2:11–15  
situation-specific or a  
general rule for all time  
and places?**

## Putting It All Together

If we put this all together, Paul was temporarily restricting women from teaching and exercising authority over men to prevent false teaching from spreading throughout the church in Ephesus. This understanding of 1 Timothy 2:11–15 better fits within Paul's interactions with women and with the Bible's depiction of women who taught men sound theology (like Priscilla) and women who held authority over men (like Deborah). In this case, we understand this passage to be situation-specific, but that does not mean it has no application today. We can understand that new converts, especially those susceptible to false doctrine, should not be teachers. We can also understand that if our church leaders are spreading false doctrine, domineering others, or causing endless disputes, we may temporarily limit certain groups of people from leadership so that we can all move forward, living faithful and peaceful lives. We can abide by the character requirements Paul lays out for overseers. And of course, we can learn from Paul, who understood that different situations may call for different solutions that are rooted in the same standards of Christian moral character.

Regardless of what side we fall on, we must grapple with the complex translation issues of this challenging passage. We must grapple with the context in which the women Paul excludes from teaching men are not teaching sound doctrine; they are leading people astray from the faith because they have been deceived. Paul is not instructing a church where women were leading faithfully, but one where women

were domineering, flaunting their wealth, and not displaying good fruit. We must also grapple with the many women throughout all of Scripture who led men and all of God's people as prophets, judges, deacons, house church leaders, church planters, teachers, warriors, and missionaries. Clearly, women were empowered by the Holy Spirit to teach sound doctrine and lead with authority.

Lastly, before applying 1 Timothy 2:11–15 as God's ban on all women teaching and holding authority over men in the church, we may want to grapple with Paul's words ourselves: "They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm" (1 Tim. 1:6–7). In other words, we must make sure that we understand what Paul is saying in 1 Timothy 2:11–15 before applying his words to our lives and teaching others, lest we become false teachers ourselves.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Still Have Questions?

This resource has addressed many, but not all, questions in 1 Timothy 2:8–15 and in conversations on women in ministry as a whole. We hope this resource has been a helpful introduction to a very challenging text, and that you will dig deeper on your own! Here are a few resources to get you started.

## What Scripture has to say...

The following books dive deep into the “problem passages” of Scripture regarding women in church leadership.

Discovering Biblical Equality: Biblical, Theological, Cultural, and Practical Perspectives—Ronald Pierce, Cynthia Long Westfall, Christa L. McKirkland

Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts—Andrew Bartlett

Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ—Cynthia Long Westfall

Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters—Philip B. Payne

## What women did...

These books consider what women actually did in the Old and New Testament and throughout the early church.

Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early

Church—Nijay K. Gupta

Christian Women in the Patristic World: Their Influence, Authority, and Legacy—Lynn H. Cohick

The Ministry of Women in the New Testament: Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership—Dorothy A. Lee

Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documented History—  
Edited and translated by Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek

Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide—Marion Ann Taylor

Crispina and Her Sisters: Women and Authority in Early Christianity—Christine Schenk, CSJ.

Women Leaders at the Table in Early Churches—Ally Kateusz.

## **A simple introduction...**

These books give a brief overview of the women in church leadership from an egalitarian perspective and are an excellent introduction for anyone new to the subject.

The Bible vs. Biblical Womanhood: How God's Word Consistently Affirms Gender Equality—Philip B. Payne

Why Can't Women Do That?: Breaking Down the Reasons Churches Put Men in Charge—Philip B. Payne and Vince Huffaker

How God Sees Women: The End of Patriarchy—Terran Williams

Still Side by Side (Available in 21 languages!)—Janet George

# Endnotes

1 Jamin Hübner, “Revisiting the Clarity of Scripture in 1 Timothy 2:12,” *Priscilla Papers*, 30, no. 3 (2016): 18–19.

2 This resource uses the New International Version (NIV) unless stated otherwise.

3 Áida Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 11.

4 Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2023), 35.

5 Andrew Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from Biblical Texts* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2020), 240.

6 Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*, 14.

7 Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from Biblical Texts*, 241

8 Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*, 13.

9 Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*, 14.

10 *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 2110.

11 Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2023), 166.

12 Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*, 166.

13 Áida Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*

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14 Christine Schenk, CSJ, *Crispina and Her Sisters: Women and Authority in Early Christianity*, 133–139.13. Aída Besançon Spencer, 1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary, 53.

15 Aída Besançon Spencer, 1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013),.

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17 Aída Besançon Spencer, 1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 62.

18 Philip B. Payne, *The Bible vs. Biblical Womanhood: How God's Word Consistently Affirms Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2023), 143.

19 Aída Besançon Spencer, 11 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 64.

20 Aída Besançon Spencer, 1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 64.

21 For a complete list of references, see the “Words for ‘Authority’ Not Used in 1 Timothy 2:12 Chart” on page 64 in 1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary.

22 Johannes P. Louw, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 37.21.

23 Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 292.

24 Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press,

2023), 170

25 Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2023), 171.

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27 Philip B. Payne, *The Bible vs. Biblical Womanhood: How God's Word Consistently Affirms Gender Equality*, 144.

28 Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*, 171.

29 Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, 294.

30 Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*, 168.

31 Aída Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 17.

32 Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2023), 86.

33 Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament*, 87

34 .Aída Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*, 15.

35 Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament*, 116.

36 Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament*, 116.

- 37 Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament*, 118.
- 38 Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament*, 116.
- 39 Áida Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*, 17.
- 40 Áida Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*, 64.
- 41 Andrew Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from Biblical Texts* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2020), 269.
- 42 Áida Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*, 17.
- 43 Áida Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*, 15.
- 44 Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2023), 175.
- 45 Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*, 175.
- 46 Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women in the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 116.
- 47 Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women in the Pauline Communities*, 118.
- 48 Áida Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 67–68.
- 49 Áida Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*, 71.

50 Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2023), 42–143.

51 Andrew Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from Biblical Texts* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2020), 266.

52 Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2023), 52–53. This is an excerpt from the play *Hippolytus*, written by the Greek tragedian Euripides. The Chorus Leader is speaking to Phaedra, the wife of the King, who is dying. In her last moments, the Chorus Leader calls out to Artemis to ease Phaedra's pain in childbirth.

53 Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians, Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 35.

54 Mary R. Lefkowitz, Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2016), 351.

55 Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament*, 143.

56 Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities*, 110–112.

57 Philip B. Payne, *he Bible vs. Biblical Womanhood: How God's Word Consistently Affirms Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2023), 149.

58 Áida Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 73.

59 Andrew Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from Biblical Texts* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2020), 272.

60 Aída Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 78

61 Philip B. Payne, *The Bible vs. Biblical Womanhood: How God's Word Consistently Affirms Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2023), 154

62 Philip B. Payne, *The Bible vs. Biblical Womanhood: How God's Word Consistently Affirms Gender Equality*, 153.

63 Note: This also could be translated as “deacon’s wives.”

64 Philip B. Payne, *The Bible vs. Biblical Womanhood: How God's Word Consistently Affirms Gender Equality*, 154.

65 Aída Besançon Spencer, *1 Timothy: A New Covenant Commentary*, 84.

66 Andrew Bartlett, Ian Paul, “Spoiling the Beautiful Difference,” Psephizo, date accessed June, 24, 2024, <https://www.psephizo.com/biblical-studies/spoiling-the-beautiful-difference/>.

67 Philip B. Payne, *The Bible vs. Biblical Womanhood: How God's Word Consistently Affirms Gender Equality*, 163.

68 Philip B. Payne, *The Bible vs. Biblical Womanhood: How God's Word Consistently Affirms Gender Equality*, 164.

69 Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2023), 86.

70 Nijay K. Gupta, *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church*, 87.

**Understanding 1 Timothy 2:8–15 in Context** can be a meaningful discussion resource for your chapter, church group, or Bible study.

This resource explores one of the most discussed passages related to women in church leadership by examining its historical, cultural, and biblical context. Readers will gain a deeper understanding of the challenges Paul and Timothy faced in Ephesus, key translation questions surrounding the passage, and the important roles women held in the early church as teachers, deacons, missionaries, apostles, and leaders.

The book also includes historical and archaeological insights, study tools for comparing Bible translations, recommended articles and media resources, and thoughtful reflection questions on topics still discussed in the church today.



#### About the Author

Brianna Cortez works for CBE International as the educational engagement associate and *Mutuality* Blog editor. She holds an MA in Intercultural Studies from Lincoln Christian University and has served churches, schools, and nonprofits in the United States and abroad for over a decade. She is passionate about resourcing ministries on biblical equality between women and men in the home, church, and world. Brianna currently lives with her husband, Cristian, in Wisconsin and enjoys reading many books on mutuality.