

THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

SHOULD WOMEN BE PASTORS AND SERVE IN OTHER ROLES OF AUTHORITY?

1 Timothy 2:1,8-11 ¹ I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people... ⁸ Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. ⁹ I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰ but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.¹¹ A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.

At first glance, these verses may make us uncomfortable. But let's take a moment to think through what they are actually saying.

Paul writes to the young Pastor Timothy that he expects all Christians to worship together and pray out loud together for all people. Paul has special directions, though, when it comes to how the congregation is to organize this worship and prayer, and who ought to have authority.

God's command, ever since the Garden of Eden, has been for men and women to work together on spiritual things: the man as the leader, and the woman as his helper. These roles apply both in the home and in the church. God holds men responsible for spiritual leadership. For this reason, it is men who serve as pastors, elders, and in other positions of spiritual authority.

WHAT ROLES SHOULD WOMEN HAVE IN THE CHURCH?

However, this does not mean women cannot teach, ¹ work, or otherwise contribute in major ways to the life of the church!! God says that both men and women are members of what is sometimes called "the priesthood of all believers" (Exodus 19:6.) This job involves encouraging other Christians, reaching out to the lost, discussing the teachings of the Bible, and passing them on to the next generation of children. A biblically organized church does not just have male leaders – it is also has female members who play a vital role in the life of the congregation. Women can serve in a wide variety of different capacities and are sometimes tasked with roles of authority over groups that do not include men, such as women's organizations, authoritative teaching over children and teenagers, and formal ministry to other women.

A WORD TO THE MEN

Because this Bible teaching 1.) is incredibly politically incorrect, and 2.) has often been abused by men, it is extremely important that Christian men strive to carry out their leadership roles in the way that God intended. God warns men that when they fail to be strong, loving spiritual leaders, they are not only failing women, families, and the congregation. They are failing the Lord. Those in roles of authority will be judged more strictly (James 3:1).

¹ Prof. Rich Gurgel and Kathy Wendland in their *Heirs Together*, write, regarding 1 Timothy 2:12, "[Paul] is not issuing two directives: a woman can't teach and a woman can't have authority over a man. Rather, the second statement helps define the first. A recent English translation of the Bible (*God's Word to the Nations*) captures that close connection quite well. It translates this verse: '**I do not permit a woman to teach in such a way as to have authority over a man.**' What Paul addresses is the kind of teaching by a woman that would violate the headship God has given to man."

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God encourages men:

- Lead a life above reproach, that is, morally faithful, upright and outstanding (1 Timothy 3:1)
- Lead without anger or disputing (1 Timothy 2:8), but be self-controlled (1 Timothy 3:2)
- Lead with a servant-like attitude (Matthew 20:26), considering the interests of others above your own (Philippians 2:4)
- Work together with women in the mission of the church (Philippians 4:3)
- Fight against the objectification, abuse, and mistreatment of women (1 Peter 3:7)

May God forgive our men for any failures of the past, and may he mold them into Christlike leaders for the future.