

# Godliness and Gender: Relating Appropriately to All (1 Timothy 2:9–12)<sup>1</sup>

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*Let's pray together: Father, your Word is truth, and we pray now that you would sanctify us by your word. Lord, we pray that you would give us contrite hearts that are humble and that tremble before what you have spoken because, Lord, we fear you. We ask that you would do this; we pray that you would give us attentive hearts. We pray that your word would speak and that we would understand. And we ask this in Jesus name and by the power of the Spirit. Amen.*

## Introduction

There is a discrepancy between C. S. Lewis's book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and the movie based on the book. The discrepancy appears when Father Christmas presents gifts to the children. He gives Peter a sword and shield. To Susan, he gives a bow and arrows and a horn. He then tells her, "You must use the bow only in great need, for I do not mean you to fight in the battle." Next, he gives Lucy a bottle and a dagger and says, "The dagger is to defend yourself at great need. For you also are not to be in the battle." Lucy responds, "Why sir? I think—I don't know—but I think I could be brave enough." To which Father Christmas replies, "That is not the point. But battles are ugly when women fight." During the battle at the end, Peter and Edmund—not Susan and Lucy—are the ones waging war against Aslan's enemies.

For some reason, the movie version edited

the comments of Father Christmas. *World Magazine* got the scoop from the film's director, Andrew Adamson:

Father Christmas gives weapons to the children but tells the girls, "I do not intend you to use them, for battles are ugly when women fight." Mr. Adamson, considering the line sexist, told Mr. Gresham, "C. S. Lewis may have had these dated ideals but at the same time there's no way I could put that in the film." The two compromised, Mr. Adamson said, with Father Christmas on-screen saying, "I hope you don't have to use them because battles are ugly and fierce."<sup>2</sup>

It is remarkable that things have changed so much since the publication of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in 1950.

If we are to be faithful to God and live godly lives, we must understand what God intends us to be as men and women. The main point of this message is that godliness is, as defined by Paul in this first letter to Timothy, relating appropriately to all people given their station in life and, among other things, their gender. If we are going to be godly, we are going to embrace what Paul says about relating appropriately to all people. Godliness is showing

due reverence to God and relating rightly to other people given our stations in life.

Let me set up the context of 1 Tim 2:9–15 by showing you the way that Paul describes godly behavior toward all people in 1 Timothy.

### **Godliness in 1 Timothy**

The Greek word for godliness has to do with keeping an appropriate distance between oneself and others. With relationship to God, this means that a person worships well (*eusebia*, good worship) by showing proper reverence and not transgressing his holiness. With relationship to other people, godliness means recognizing who we are, where we stand, how we fit with respect to other people, and then behaving appropriately.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps you're aware that Paul is writing to Timothy because there are false teachers in Ephesus. So Paul says in 1:3, "charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine." So this is what godliness looks like for Timothy in relationship to the false teachers: Tell them "not to teach any different doctrine."

### ***A List of Instructions***

Then we get down to 2:1, and what we see is that Paul is going to begin a list of instructions. So he says, "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people" (1 Tim 2:1). Toward outsiders, Timothy, this is how you instruct the church to relate to them: Pray for them.

In 2:8, Paul says, "I desire that in every place the men should pray." Those are instructions for men: pray without anger and quarreling. Then, v. 9 says, "likewise also that women...." Elders are addressed in 3:1: "If anyone aspires to the office of overseer...." What follows then is what godliness looks like for the elders. In 3:8, Paul says, "Deacons likewise must also be dignified...." In 2:11, Paul addresses deaconesses. The NASB has "the women likewise." In the ESV, this is rendered "the wives likewise." I believe it should be "the women likewise." So I would understand 3:11 to refer to women deacons (cf. Rom 16:1).

In 1 Tim 3:14–15 Paul gives to Timothy his purpose statement for the whole letter. This is why

Paul is writing to Timothy. He's not there, and he says, "I hope to come to you soon" (and I think the implication is "to help you address some of these situations"), "but I am writing these things to you so that if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth." So why is Paul writing to Timothy? He's writing to Timothy so that Timothy will know how it is necessary to behave in the church.

We keep going and we get to chapter four, where in the first few verses, again, Paul addresses false teaching, saying that "some will depart from the faith," following "deceitful spirits and teachings of demons" (1 Tim 4:1).

### ***Teach These Things***

Because Paul is giving what amounts to a list of instructions, beginning in 2:1 with "First of all" and continuing through 4:6, when he says, "If you put *these things* before the brothers," it seems that he's referring to everything that he's said to this point. So Paul is writing to Timothy so that Timothy will know how to conduct himself in the church (3:14–15), and then he says to Timothy, "Here's what I want you to do." First, he says, the men are to pray. Then, for women, likewise, this is how they are to conduct themselves. (We'll come back to 2:9–15). This is what you do with elders (3:1–7); this is what you do with deacons (3:8–13). And now, Paul says in 4:6, "If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus."

Paul wants Timothy to be a good servant of Christ Jesus. Timothy can't do that if he sets aside Paul's instructions. As we continue in the letter, look at 4:7 where at the end of the verse Paul tells Timothy, "Train yourself for godliness." And this word "godliness" is going to come up again and again as we go forward (cf. also 3:16).

Verse 11 of chapter 4 shows what Paul understands godliness to look like for Timothy: "Command and teach *these things*." Compare 4:6, "if you put *these things* before the brothers," with 4:11, "Command and teach *these things*." This is what Paul wants communicated.

### *The List of Instructions Continued*

**Relationships.** In 1 Tim 4:12 Paul writes, “Let no one despise you for your youth but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” And then, in 5:1, we continue with godliness instructions on how the church ought to relate to its members given their various stations in life. In 1 Tim 5:1 he says, “Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father. Treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters in all purity.” Godliness means relating appropriately to all people, given who they are, given what gender they are, given their station in life.

**True widows.** In 1 Tim 5:3–4, we continue with these instructions, “Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household,” by taking care of their elderly.

**Teach these things.** Then look down at 5:7, again, “Command *these things* as well.” Look at how seriously Paul takes his own commands in 5:8, “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” If you don’t do what Paul says to do, in a sense, you are denying the faith, and you are worse than an unbeliever.

**Younger widows.** The message of 1 Tim 5:14 is not popular today, but this is what Paul understands to be the role of younger widows. He says, “I would have younger widows marry.” So that’s his fundamental statement. You should get married if you are a younger widow, “bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander” (1 Tim 5:14). This is very consistent with Paul’s teaching over in Titus, 2:3–5, where he tells the older women in v. 4, “train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be reviled.” Paul’s teaching is very consistent.

**Elders again.** We continue through 1 Timothy, and we see in 5:17 that Paul addresses the “elders who rule well,” how they ought to be treated

by the church. Then in 5:20, he explains how the elders who persist in sin need to be dealt with.

**Slaves.** First Timothy 6:1 instructs slaves on how they should conduct themselves, in line with “the teaching that accords with godliness” (6:3). That’s how the slaves need to conduct themselves. Then look at 6:2. In the middle of the verse, Paul says again, “Teach and urge *these things*.” Paul wants his instructions to be communicated.

**The rich.** Finally, Paul addresses how the rich ought to conduct themselves in 6:17.

So all through the letter of 1 Timothy, what Paul is addressing is how people should relate to one another. It is as though Paul is saying, “Timothy, this is how you need to instruct the people in the church in their various positions to conduct their lives.”

### **1 Timothy 2:9–15**

What I want to do at this point is look at chapter 2, where we will see Paul’s instructions regarding women. We want to look at what he says regarding women, and we want to look at why he says what he says regarding women.

So in 1 Tim 2:9–10, what we will see first are Paul’s instructions for how women should dress. Second, in 2:11–12, Paul’s instructions for how women should conduct themselves in the church. And then, in 2:13–15, we’ll see the reasons Paul gives as to why women should dress this way and why women should conduct themselves in the way he instructs them.

### *Appropriate Adornment*

In 1 Tim 2:9–10 we read, “Likewise also, that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls, or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.” So, some people look at a text like this, and they say, “You people who want to urge complementarian gender roles, you want to keep verses eleven and twelve, but you don’t want to keep verses nine and ten, because look at the way your women dress at church.”

Well, I hope that if you come to a church

where complementarian gender roles are taught, you won't find immodestly dressed women, and I hope you won't find women about whom the most significant thing you see is the expense, or the gaudiness, or the faddishness, or the trendiness, or whatever it may be, of their clothing. I hope that if you come to a church that teaches these complementarian gender roles, what you find is that the most significant thing you see about the women there is that they profess godliness. They are characterized by good works. Hopefully that's what you see. If that's not what you see, the problem is not with complementarianism. The problem is that the Bible is not being obeyed.

And so, ladies, here's an easy point of application for us: are you dressing modestly? This is what it means to be godly. This is what it means for you to relate appropriately to the young men around you and to the older men around you. You don't want them to look at you as an object. You don't want them to look at you and have desires that you're not really wanting to provoke. You're just trying to look nice! So you want to be careful. You want to dress modestly. That's what godliness looks like for young ladies. Dress modestly, respectably. Verse 9 reads, "not with braided hair or gold or pearls, or costly attire." I don't think that means "never wear gold, never braid your hair, and never wear costly attire." I don't think that's what it means because in a parallel text over in 1 Peter 3, Peter says, regarding the women, "do not let your adorning be external." And then he goes on, "...the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, the putting on of clothing" (1 Pet 3:3). Now Peter is not suggesting that women should never put on clothing! He's suggesting that clothing should not be what you are characterized by. And so the point is not, "Never wear gold. Never wear pearls. Never braid your hair. Never wear anything that's expensive." The point is "don't make that the most significant thing about your appearance." Be a person whose character is evident in your life. Be a person who's professing godliness (1 Tim 2:10), and make sure your clothing is fitting for the godliness that you profess, a person who's marked by good works. That's how the women should dress themselves.

### *Appropriate Instruction and Authority*

Then we come to 1 Tim 2:11–12: "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness." Now, the first thing here, "Let a woman learn quietly," I don't think that means never speaking, because if we look right above this at 2:3, Paul says that he wants the people to pray "for kings, and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and *quiet* life." This is the same Greek word. So living a quiet life doesn't mean never speaking. Nor does learning quietly mean never speaking. It means speaking when appropriate, and it means speaking in a way that is (the next word in verse 11) submissive. So there are two things here: learning and then being submissive.

Those two things come up again in v. 12, where Paul says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet." So, v. 11, "let a woman learn with submissiveness," and then those two things are restated negatively, in v. 12, "I do not permit a woman to teach over a man, and I do not permit a woman to exercise authority over a man."

Now perhaps some of you are looking at your Greek New Testament, and you can see that the words "to teach" and "to exercise authority" are both infinitives, and they both relate to the main verb, which is negated: "I do not permit." So, grammatically, this cannot mean, "I do not permit a woman to teach authoritatively." Nor, grammatically, can it mean, "I do not permit a woman to teach in a usurping way." That's not what Paul means. If that's what Paul wanted to communicate, he would have used a very different grammatical construction.

He's not addressing false teaching here. If he were addressing false teaching, he would have used the word he used in 1 Tim 1:3 to refer to false teaching: *heterodidaskaleo*. But that's not the word that he uses here. He uses a positive word. The word teaching is always used positively in the pastoral epistles.

So, Paul doesn't want women teaching men, and he doesn't want women exercising authority over men. I don't think he means, "Well, if you've got a male senior pastor, you can have women teaching men." I don't think that's what he means.



If that's what he meant, I believe that's what he would have said. What he says is, "The women should not teach men, and the women should not exercise authority over men."

Now, this seems offensive. This seems counter-cultural. And it is. And let me say that what is said about gender roles in the New Testament is counter-cultural, and it's to *advance the gospel*.

Do you know that more marriages fail in this country because men and women reject what the Bible says about gender roles than they fail for other reasons. If you examine marriages, the reasons people don't get along is they are living like Gen 3:16. The woman is seeking to run the household. And then the man is either responding with excessive harshness, or he's not responding in the way that Christ would. So what Paul says here is very significant for us. It's significant for us in the church.

**Gender elsewhere in Paul.** Paul addresses similar things in Ephesians 5 with regard to marriage. In 1 Corinthians 11, he addresses how women should conduct themselves in the worship of the church. In 1 Timothy 3, he addresses the leadership of the church, where in vv. 1–7 he limits eldership to men, and then he allows women to be deacons in vv. 8–13.<sup>4</sup>

### ***The Trans-Cultural Grounds for Paul's Instruction***

Paul grounds his instruction that women not teach or exercise authority over men in 1 Tim 2:13–15. And this grounding that Paul gives for this instruction is very significant because he argues in the same way against homosexuality. In Romans 1, Paul also appeals to the created order to argue against homosexual behavior, or really, to condemn homosexual behavior. He says that it's against nature (Rom 1:26). And here, in 1 Timothy 2 he's going to argue from the created order, from nature, to support what he has said about women not teaching or exercising authority over men.

**Adam was formed first.** So, in v. 13, Paul says, "For Adam was formed first." So this is the first reason that Paul gives as to why women should not teach men. Adam was formed first.

Now there are some who scoff at this, who think that this is not very good logic. There are

some today who say, "This is bad logic. That's no reason!" But those of us who believe that Paul was inspired should not make such suggestions. Paul, I believe, was a very careful, a very thorough thinker. Paul read Genesis 1–3 as Moses intended it to be read.<sup>5</sup>

So, when Paul says, "For Adam was formed first," there's a whole biblical theology behind it that says God created Adam, (and this comes out in 1 Cor 11:8), "to work the garden and keep it" (Gen 2:15). And then, he put Eve in the garden to help the man (Gen 2:18). So this statement, "For Adam was formed first" (1 Tim 2:13), is a shorthand for a holistic reading of Genesis 1–3 that sees Adam as the leader and Eve as the helper.

**Adam was not deceived.** God is a thoughtful God who thinks about what He does before He does it. And surely, if He makes the man first, there's a reason for that. And that's the way that Paul is reading Genesis. So "For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim 2:13), and then in v. 14 he says, "and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." Now this argument, I think, is Paul's way of saying that there was in the garden a structure of authority, and that structure of authority grows out of the fact that God had given the command not to eat of the fruit of this tree to the man (Gen 2:17). And then the man's responsibility was to communicate that charge to the woman. The man's responsibility was to keep the garden (2:15), which some suggest included keeping out unclean serpents.

So this statement that Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived (1 Tim 2:14) is Paul's way of saying that Satan subverted the created order by approaching the woman. Satan did not fight fair! He deceived the woman. And then you'll remember that God's response to this is not to say, "Eve, what have you done?" But to say, "Adam, where are you?" (Gen 3:9). So God holds Adam responsible for what took place. And Paul, reading this correctly, says in Rom 5:12, "through one *man* sin entered the world and death through sin." So for Moses and for Paul and for God, Adam was the authority in the garden. He was responsible for the Fall. Paul cites this as evidence for why the woman

should not teach or exercise authority over men. It's a very strong biblical argument.

**Saved through childbearing.** And then Paul says in 1 Tim 2:15, "yet she will be saved through childbearing." You might look at this and say, "Well, that's a strange thing to say. She'll be saved through childbearing? What about the women who are barren, who can't have children?" Well, Paul continues, "She will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self control."

Those of you who have studied Paul at all know that he believes that justification is *by faith*. Justification does not come as a result of some meritorious work, whether it be childbearing or anything else. So Paul is not suggesting that women will earn their salvation by childbearing. I think what he's saying is, "Women, if you embrace your role as women, (and what he's done is picked the one thing that men cannot do!), if you will embrace your gender, women, and continue in faith, then gladly accepting whom God has made you to be as a woman will be *evidence* of your faith. And the grounds of your salvation will be your faith. The evidence of your faith will be that you accept your role as women, which includes the bearing of children.

## Conclusion

In closing, let me draw your attention to what Paul urges Timothy at the end of his letter, in 1 Tim 6:20. He's given to him all these instructions about what godliness looks like, how Timothy is to instruct the members of the church to relate appropriately to other people given their station in the church, given their gender, given their age, and at the end of the letter, he says, "O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you." And that deposit includes this letter. "Guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradiction that is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you."

*Let's pray together: Father, I pray that your Word would be allowed to speak. And Lord, I pray that by your Spirit you would convict our hearts and give us gladness and joy to accept the treatment that Jesus*

*promised we would receive if we kept his Word. And Lord, give us a winsome love for people and an ability to teach and rebuke and correct and to train with all patience and gentleness. Lord, we don't believe these things because we make them up or because we prefer them. We believe these things because you have spoken. You have revealed yourself in your Word. And we ask that you would give us the ability to guard the deposit entrusted to us. We love you; we praise you in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.*<sup>6</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This sermon was delivered at a chapel service on April 4, 2007, at Northwestern College in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

<sup>2</sup>Andrew Coffin, "The Chronicles of Making Narnia," *World*, December 10, 2005, cover story [cited April 2007]. Online: <http://www.worldmag.com/articles/11336>. I am thankful to Eric Schumacher, on whose blog (<http://scripturealone.blogspot.com>) I saw this item.

<sup>3</sup>My attention was drawn to this by Elizabeth Vandiver's Teaching Company lectures on Virgil's *Aeneid*. Vandiver noted that Aeneas is often called "pious," and she explained "piety" along the lines that I have described "godliness" in this paragraph. Compare BDAG's entry on *eusebia*: "piety, reverence, loyalty [exhibited towards parents or deities], fear of God' . . . cp. Diog. L. 3, 83: the pious follow sacrificial custom and take care of temples; hence Aeneas is repeatedly called 'pious' in Vergil's *Aeneid*."

<sup>4</sup>I owe this consolidation of Paul's teaching to a comment made by J. Ligon Duncan III in his presentation at the Different by Design Conference, audio available online at <http://www.cbmw.org/Different-by-Design-2007>.

<sup>5</sup>See the discussion in James M. Hamilton Jr., "What Women Can Do in Ministry: Full Participation within Biblical Boundaries," in *Women, Ministry and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms* (ed. Mark Husbands and Timothy Larsen; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 32–52.

<sup>6</sup>I wish to express my gratitude to my wife, who transcribed this sermon from the audio file.