

"Complementary Calling" - 1 Timothy 2:8-15

We live in a changing culture. The velocity of that change is almost frightening. Many, well, maybe most of you, can remember what life was like in 1988. If you had been transported from 1988 to 2018, I'll bet you wouldn't recognize the culture we live in today. In 1988, the Internet was just being launched. There were no cell phones. And if a kid had a pager, we figured he must be a drug dealer.

But the most dramatic shift has been in the moral fabric of our culture. I don't want to get into detail; I think you know what I'm talking about. We have decided, as a culture, that we have the right to determine what is proper, what is good. We have bought into the lie of post-modernism, that truth can be culturally determined. We have determined, as a culture, that what God says is irrelevant.

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isaiah 5:20)

Thankfully, while culture does change, God remains absolutely constant. Can we mess with God's truth?

Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. (Romans 3:4a)

God's word is absolutely true. God's word is absolutely relevant. And we dare not substitute the foolishness of man for the pristine truth of the Bible.

I am called to deliver the truth of God's word to you. I'm not called to be innovative or creative. I'm not called to be politically correct. I am called to read distinctly from God's word, to give the sense and explain the meaning. The passage I am called to preach on this morning runs counter to what our culture claims to be morally acceptable.

I am what theologians call a complementarian. I'll explain what that means as we go along. But I want to say right here at the outset that many, if not most folks in our culture will say that the truth I'm about to deliver is demeaning to women. It is not. In fact, it is just the opposite. This truth exalts women to a position that is much higher than secular culture has ever proposed. Too many churches, too many pastors, too many denominations have capitulated to culture on this point and it is wreaking havoc on the Church. So, call me a chauvinist; call me a dinosaur, but I'm going to tell you what the word of God says and what it means.

Let's read this passage of scripture right now: 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. (1 Timothy 2:8-15)

Now, the verses that are most offensive to our culture are 11 and 12.

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. (1 Timothy 2:11-12)

And I admit, these verses have been taken out of context by some individuals and used to demean and subject women to the status of doormat. “Women are to be seen and not heard,” they say. “Women are never to express an opinion.” Those are lies from the pit of hell.

We need to understand the context of this instruction. There were problems in the church at Ephesus and Paul left Timothy there to deal with those problems. Timothy’s charge is given back in chapter 1:

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. (1 Timothy 1:3-4)

This was no easy task. So, Paul uses this letter to exhort Timothy to be courageous and steadfast. In this section of the letter, Paul is dealing with problems that existed with their corporate worship. Paul sums this up in Chapter 3, where he writes:

I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

Now, please understand that the church of the living God is not a building. It is a collection of saints, people who have been saved by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. When we gather to worship, as the body of Christ, there is a right way and a wrong way to conduct ourselves, and that is what this passage is all about.

Prayer needs to be a consistent part of our public worship. So, Paul writes:

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; (1 Timothy 2:8)

It is very likely that the Ephesian church met in a number of different places. In the first century, they didn’t have dedicated chapels like we do. They mostly met in private homes. So, when he exhorts the men to pray everywhere, he means, at least in part, that they pray wherever the church meets. As we pray, we recognize the fact that worship is about God, not us. There is no place for anger and wrath in public worship. As we meet on Sunday morning, we need to set our doubts aside.

And then in verse 9, we see the phrase: ... *in like manner also, that the women* ... Just as the men pray and focus on God, so must the women “in like manner”. And then Paul addresses an issue that was apparently a problem in Ephesus.

in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. (1 Timothy 2:9-10)

There were women in the Ephesian church who were dressing to call attention to themselves. In that culture, women who were well-to-do financially would flaunt their wealth by how they dressed and made themselves up. They would braid their hair and adorn it with gold. They would wear clothing and accessories that said, “Look at me; I’m better than that woman over there.” And I don’t think it is too much of a stretch that some

of them were dressing in a way designed to draw the attention of men, maybe even to distract the men from their own wives. And remember what Jesus said about that particular dynamic:

But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:28)

Do you think that ever happens in churches today? Oh boy, does it!

Now again, we have to be careful not to take this admonition out of context and cross over the road to the ditch on the other side. Some have used this to say that women should never wear their hair in braids or that women should never wear pearls. That is not at all what this is about. Women, it is perfectly okay to look nice when you come to worship. It is a good thing to make yourselves attractive to your husbands. It is okay for single women to look nice as they hope to attract a mate. But when you come to worship, you should dress modestly and appropriately for the culture of the local church. If you are going to be noticed, you want to be noticed for your good works which glorify God. You profess your godliness with your good works, not by dressing like a showgirl!

And now we return to those somewhat uncomfortable words in verses 11 and 12. I'm going to start with just four words. First of all, because these four words are often overlooked as folks focus on what follows and secondly, because these four words are wonderfully, amazingly radical, especially considering the cultures from which they came.

Let a woman learn (1 Timothy 2:11a)

In Greek culture, women weren't expected to learn. If they were married, they were cloistered up in the house and nobody could even talk to them without their husband's permission. They didn't think women had enough cognitive ability to understand the deep things of religion or philosophy. And the Jewish rabbis were even worse. A Jewish rabbi thought it beneath his station to even talk to a woman. Oh, the women could come to Synagogue with their husbands, but they could never speak, never ask questions. But that has never been God's design.

Let a woman learn!

From a spiritual standpoint, women have equal standing in God's sight.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:27-29)

Jesus encouraged women to know the truth. He revealed who He was to an immoral Samaritan woman at Jacob's well outside of Sychar. (John 4) To Martha, He said,

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

And of Martha's sister Mary, He said,

"Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42)

What was that good part? She was sitting at Jesus feet to hear His word.

Women were the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. And I could go on and on ... Speaking of Priscilla, Lydia, Phoebe. Women are highly valued and if you are a woman, you have equal exalted standing in the kingdom of God.

But men and women have different roles in the Church. Men and women complement one another. And while we have equal standing, we have divergent roles to play. Why should that be a surprise? Have you noticed women and men are physically different? Here's an obvious example: How many guys in here have given birth? None of you? Well, that certainly doesn't sound equal to me!

I believe God made us to fill complementary roles, and because I hold that viewpoint, I'm called a complementarian, as opposed to an egalitarian. An egalitarian believes that it is appropriate for women to fill all the same roles as men in the Church. I've had some interesting conversations about this because, a number of our ACMNP women are in seminary preparing to become pastors. I have no problem at all with a woman going to seminary.

Let a woman learn (1 Timothy 2:11a)

I think every woman in our church should take the Contenders classes. You need to be as saturated with the word of God as the men. But ... let's get back to the text.

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. (1 Timothy 2:11-12)

Now, this cannot mean that a woman is never to speak in church. We don't have to slap a strip of duct tape over our ladies' mouths as they come into the chapel. It is perfectly appropriate for women to sing praises to the Lord. It is perfectly appropriate for women to offer prayers of thanksgiving, confession, intercession. It is perfectly appropriate for women to offer a testimony, giving thanks for what God is doing in her life. But she is not to interrupt the formal teaching ministry of the church. She is not to be in a position of authority over men, or to teach men. And she is certainly not to be the pastor of a church.

If this assertion makes me a dinosaur and a chauvinist, I will embrace it because that is what the holy word of God clearly teaches. We must not shrink from it because the secular culture is offended.

Paul goes on to offer an explanation. There are quite a number of women who are offended by this explanation, by the way. Take it easy on me, okay? I'm just the messenger.

For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. (1 Timothy 2:13-14)

You know the story of original sin. Eve ate the forbidden fruit and offered some to her husband. But Adam's sin was greater. He was the one who was given God's holy Law and it was his responsibility to teach it to his wife. I think he actually added to God's command, which is never a good idea. (He told Eve she couldn't even touch the tree in the midst of the garden.) When confronted by his sin, he tried to shift blame to Eve ... and by implication, God Himself.

Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." (Genesis 3:12)

What a jerk! Adam failed to take responsibility for his actions. Adam failed to exercise the responsibility given to him by Almighty God! As a result of this original sin, all

creation was cursed and part of that curse involves damage to the God-ordained relationship between men and women.

To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you." (Genesis 3:16)

God designed marriage. He instituted it to be a complementary relationship – two individuals who become one flesh, each bringing different strengths to the partnership. Two becoming one flesh, the whole greater than the sum of its parts. But as a result of sin, our corrupted nature creates sinful friction in this relationship. When God said to Eve, “Your desire shall be for your husband,” the implication is that women will desire to dominate their husbands . . . to usurp the role of spiritual leadership. When God said, “he shall rule over you.” the implication is that the husband will desire to dominate his wife in an unloving, ungodly way.

Jesus Christ is the solution to both of these problems. By submitting to His Lordship and becoming His disciples, we can learn how to submit to and serve each other. And instead of a battle of the sexes, we can value what each partner brings to the relationship.

God has ordained that men take on the role of spiritual leadership, but remember what leadership in God’s kingdom looks like.

Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. (Mark 10:42-44)

Leadership within the Church must be servant-leadership. It is humble. It is other-centered. It is exercised with agape love. Just as Jesus came not to be served, but to serve, to give up His life as a ransom for many.

But that doesn’t mean that women have no role in the life of the Church. Ladies, you are called to be disciples of the King of Creation. You are called to learn more about Him, to draw closer to Him. You are called to be witnesses with your lifestyle and your words. You are called to participate in Bible studies. You are called to teach other women, especially those younger than you. You are called to teach children, and I believe that is what verse 15 is really about.

Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control. (1 Timothy 2:15)

This is a difficult verse, because it almost sounds like if you’re saved if you have a baby, but that cannot be so, because there is only one way to be saved, and that’s by faith in Jesus Christ.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I’ve watched my bride go through labor, and I know it is work! As you look closer at the verse, you should notice that Paul changes tenses right in the middle. The “she”, I believe, refers to Eve, as the mother of all. The “they” refers to every mother who follows. And to be saved, they must continue in faith – that’s the most important element, faith in Jesus Christ. And by continuing in faith, it leads to sanctification, the

development of love, holiness and self-control, demonstrating the joy of Christ to the next generation.

Ladies, you have a role to play in the Church. It is a critically important role, but it is not the same role that the men have to play.

Men, you need to step up to the plate and take on the role of spiritual leadership. You are to be the teachers when the church gathers for worship.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

Every person who has been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ is called to a ministry, but we're not all called to the same ministry. Our ministries complement each other. And the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts.