

# Sexual Complementarity - Lesson 4

by John Piper

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*The sermon discusses the biblical roles of men and women in ministry, with a focus on the distinction between men and women in leadership and the importance of understanding the context of 1 Timothy 2:12-13.*

**Duration:** 56:50

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 18:26, Romans 6:22, 1 Corinthians 16:22, 1 Timothy 2:12-13

**Topics:** "Gender Roles", "Biblical Manhood"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the topic of submission and leadership in the context of manhood and womanhood. They argue that the Bible teaches a distinction between men and women in their roles and responsibilities. The speaker believes that this distinction is beneficial for individuals, society, and the glory of God. The main text examined is 1 Timothy 2, with a focus on verses 12 and 13. The speaker emphasizes the importance of proper inquiry and obedience to God's teachings on gender roles.

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## Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org). Before I begin tonight, I want to set straight a mistake I made some weeks ago. When we were talking the night between seminars on the foreknowledge controversy, I said something to the effect that John Sanders, who wrote *The God Who Risks*, had been let go, I don't remember my exact words, let go, or fired, or was not able to continue teaching at Oak Hills Bible College.

That's not true. I have learned subsequently, and I got that information, and should have checked it out, and didn't, and therefore have been on the phone with him to apologize. And I've called Oak Hills to make sure I can do anything they want me to do to set that straight.

So I told both of them I would tell you that it was a mistake, and apologize to you for not getting my sources straight. So let us go to school on my mistake here, especially in these very controversial days when we must guard our lips more carefully than ever. So when you hear something to that effect, make sure you get it from the horse's mouth.

Because you might even be misunderstanding your source, which is, I think, the case with me. So I hope that you will learn from my mistake, and you will not carry that misunderstanding any further. So I think we're clear, real clear with a brother, Sanders.

I think we're clear with Oak Hills on the phone with both of them. And now I hope I'm clear with you, and we'll lay that one to rest. If you have any questions about it, I'm sorry that I was not more careful to check my sources and be more reticent.

Let's pray before we begin tonight. Father, here we are now in our last session together on this particular topic for this particular seminar on manhood and womanhood, biblical perspective here and sexual complementarity. And I know it's been fast and tonight will be fast.

And there are vastly more things to see than we've seen. But Lord, I'm asking that you would take the seeds sown and make them grow into plants of obedience. And grant that you would set us on at least a trajectory of proper inquiry here as a group.

So come and help me to be efficient and not get bogged down in any rabbit trails. And I ask, Lord Jesus, that there would be a docile spirit in our hearts to comply with your word. And I pray that I would be faithful to it.

In Jesus' name, amen. Tonight's session is on men and women in ministry. And in particular, we'll try to focus on the question of whether or not some roles in leadership in the church are intended by the Bible to be fulfilled by spiritual Christlike men rather than spiritual Christlike women.

But let me precede that focus on First Timothy two with just some general thoughts on when men and women in the ministry, according to the Bible. These are just general statements that I want to make sure I don't leave unsaid as we get into the nitty gritty of exegesis. Number one, all Christians, men and women, are ministers.

No one is off duty. All of life should have a radical orientation around the work of the kingdom. Ephesians 4.12, equip the saints to do the work of the ministry, and that's men and women.

Every woman and every man should think of himself or herself as a minister. Secondly, ministry is the stewarding of grace through gifts for the demonstration of love and the upbuilding of the faith and the ingathering of God's elect. I base that on First Peter 4.10 and 11.

First Peter 4.10 is a crucial text for me in this regard. As each has received a gift, use it as stewards of the manifold grace of God. Also, First Corinthians 12.

So gifts are unique, tailor-made enablements given by the spirit by which you steward grace. So grace comes down, and as it bends out horizontally through you, if there's an anointing from God on that, a unique expression of grace is ministered through you, and that's called ministry. And it's the use of spiritual gifts.

Third, all spiritual gifts, though I will argue not all offices or roles, are given to women and are to be used for the good of the church, the reaching of the lost, the glory of God. For the office of elder or overseer or pastor, which are interchangeable. We spent a whole weekend two weekends ago on this issue.

If you want to get those tapes, they'll be ready sometime in the not too distant future. And there you can hear five hours worth of what it means to be an elder pastor overseer. The office of pastor or elder or overseer is the responsibility, I'm going to argue, of spiritual men who aim to equip the saints for ministry through the teaching and oversight.

First Timothy 2.12 says this teaching and authority is the unique responsibility of men, not women. Number five, the difference between an elder and a deacon is the role of teaching and governing. We'll see more of this in a moment.

So that the easiest way to apply First Timothy 2.12 is to say that the elders of the local church should be men. That's the text we'll spend almost all of our time on tonight. And number six.

But the real action, the real ministry in a healthy church is what is happening by the spirit, by the power of the spirit through the gifts of the spirit in the small groups and the informal times of ministry to one another. With words of knowledge, wisdom, gifts, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, mercy, teaching, exhortation, prayer, and all manners of service. In other words, I hope that you will break out of the mold if you're in it, which we were for some years in this church I believe.

That ministry means belonging to some committee or board. So that for some reason you didn't get elected, you were being hindered in ministry. And the mindset should be exactly the opposite.

A few poor souls have to serve on committees in order to liberate the saints, men and women, to do what counts in the church. Committee work is not what counts. If it's done right, it enables what counts.

And what counts is what happens out there in the commons afterwards. Or what happens on a phone call tonight to an erring brother or sister. Or what happens in a hospital room.

Or what happens in a confrontation over a lunch for Christ's sake at work. Or what happens if you write a letter to your erring lost brother. I mean there's a zillion things are what counts.

And if the elders bury themselves away for two, three, four hours every three weeks and do their job right, that'll happen in a church. If they do their job wrong, that won't happen in a church. To not belong to that little group of eighteen guys is not to be evicted from ministry.

If they're doing their job right and don't have big heads trying to convince everybody that's the ministry, which it isn't. Okay, now, why I stand by this distinction, just a couple of summary comments here before we look at the text. Why I stand by this distinction in role between men and women in ministry.

Number one, because the sense seems plain to me and not terribly complicated in 1 Timothy 2, 12-13, where we'll spend our time in just a minute. Number two, because this fits with the overall picture of complementarity in Genesis and Jesus' ministry and Paul's and Peter's teaching on marriage. And I have never, number three, I have never seen any other texts that contradict this meaning.

What the other texts do, here are a few texts, for example, Galatians 3-28, there is neither male nor female. Or Acts 2, where the women are prophesying. What texts like that do is not contradict.

If you're not bent on finding a contradiction, they don't contradict. They refine our application and protect us from abuses. So the context of Galatians 3-28 is all about salvation there.

There's neither male nor female. If you took that as sexually as some do, it would support homosexuality. There's neither male nor female, so when you're looking for a live-in partner, you can choose either sex, because there's no male nor female.

But we know that's not Paul's intention in view of other things that he says, and we know it's not his intention in the flow of the context there, which is about being clothed with Christ, being children of God,

and that's where our equality shines, in the presence of God. And then there's Acts 2, that women are prophesying. No problem.

But if you have women prophesying, and then you have women forbidden to do certain kinds of authoritative teaching, you just, instead of saying, ah, see, contradiction, you can't have both texts, you say, okay, then we've got to understand what authoritative teaching are and what prophesying are in a way that coheres here. And that helps you define both of them in a proper way. You don't have to find contradictions if you don't want to.

So I think these texts liberate in many ways, but they don't have to contradict, and they refine and protect us from narrowness and abuses. Number four, the aim of the New Testament is to redeem sin-distorted relationships between men and women, but it redeems them by removing the distortions of headship and the distortions of submission, not by leveling all distinctions in role. So, for example, if you say in the church, just like we've argued in marriage, there should be a group of men who should lead, and all men and women then follow that leadership, the Bible has lots to say about purifying and refining and defining the nature of that leadership in terms of service.

Let the leader be as one who serves Luke 22, 26. But as I said two weeks ago, three weeks ago, when Jesus got on the floor, took off his outer garment, bound a towel around and washed the disciples' feet as a slave, nobody doubted for a moment who the leader was in that room at that moment. So to define leadership as servanthood is not to abolish leadership by servanthood.

Is that clear? And I think the Bible is bent on helping us rescue submission from mindless subservience and rescue leadership from domination and abuse and control. Number five. Since I see this distinction in the Bible, I believe it is good for women and men and for our society as a whole and for the glory of God.

So those are five reasons why I believe what I believe, why I stand here, why I teach these things. Now we go to the text, at least one text tonight. This is the main one.

And so we're going to spend most of our time on it. First Timothy, chapter two. And the reason I included verses one and two, along with eight to 15, is because there's a link up in this word quiet that I'm going to need to pull down in order to help shed light on the meaning of the key verses, which are 12 and 13.

So let's read this unit together here. First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. Now dropping to verse eight.

Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without wrath and dissension. Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing and modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over men, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was created first, first created, then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression.

But women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith and love and holiness with discretion. Now you couldn't ask for a more politically incorrect passage in the universe. This is an unbelievably out-of-step text in our day.

Any pastor who preaches on this deserves a medal and a sheep. So I am not naive that the way this sounds in our culture is questionable, to put it mildly. So let's try to tackle at least three things.

What does quiet mean? What does submission mean? And what kind of teaching and authority are forbidden? Those would be my three questions tonight that I'd like to try to work through exegetically with you. And then if we have time, we'll tackle verse 15. I don't think verse 15 is as hard as some make it out to be, but we'll see if we have time for that.

I think it's more important that we try to understand the limits that are placed here and the freedoms that are manifest there. So first of all, let's take the term silence. A woman is to learn, is to learn, quietly receive instruction or quietly learn.

So the context here is one of receiving instruction. It's the gathered community to be taught by someone, and he asks that the women be quiet. He refers to it here in verse 12, remain quiet, and he refers to it here.

Now, first observation I'm going to make is this wider contextual one with this word back up here, this quiet word in verse 2. You see, hesuchion. And then here, I should have put it here. It's the same word here, hesuchia, different ending.

And it's the same word right here, quietly, quietly. So my first clue as to how narrow to interpret the word quiet. You women were singing a minute ago, is that excluded? Can a woman ask questions here and so on? Those kinds of questions might arise in your mind.

You say, well, what do you mean quiet? Well, here, leading a life that is tranquil and quiet probably doesn't mean that you're leading a life where you don't say anything. It has to do with that quietness and sense of unruffled, tranquil, peaceful. So it sounds like this word in the context here has a ring not of silence, no talking, but of that wider sense of quietness in the community.

We want not a loud, boisterous, troubled life. We want a tranquil, quiet life in all godliness and dignity. So my first clue that that's probably the drift here is that context.

The second thing to notice here is that this but puts the silence in verse 12, the quietness, over against the exercise of authority. Allow women to teach or exercise authority over men, but to remain hesuchia, to remain quiet. Now, here's the way I would paraphrase that.

So what sort of quietness does Paul have in mind? It's the kind of quietness that respects and honors the leadership of the men God has called to oversee the church, because that's what's being contrasted here. He's got men teaching and exercising this authority, and he wants the women to be, instead of doing that, remain quiet. So it's a kind of quietness that respects that kind of leadership by the men.

Verse 11 says that the quietness is in all submissiveness. Verse 12 says the quietness is the opposite of authority over men. I didn't draw your attention to that.

Quietly receive instruction with all or entire submissiveness. So it's the kind of quietness that renders submission to this teaching. So the opposite would be saying things or making noises that belittles that teaching or that authority, that calls it into question, that says, I don't want to be led, and I don't want to have men serving in that capacity.

That would be the kind of thing coming out of a mouth that would be the opposite of hesuchia, or quietness. So the point seems not whether a woman says nothing, because we have, I'm going to show you in just a minute, when we talk about the parameters of teaching, that there's lots of women talk in the New Testament. So it's not total silence, it seems to me, but a submissive spirit and whether she supports the authority of the men God has called to oversee the church.

So quietness means not speaking out in a way that compromises that authority. That'd be my definition. Not speaking out in a way that compromises this exercise of authority or this exercise of teaching here.

So that's my effort to try to balance the natural inclination to take this word to mean too much with what we know, according to other teachings in the New Testament, as well as the context here, I think, is it's more acceptable New Testament meaning. Second question, or second observation, or focus, teaching. What is being forbidden here? When he says, I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over men.

Let's ask this question first. Are there any, in this letter and in the other pastoral letters, as well as the wider New Testament, is there any teaching being done by women that we can bring alongside this and say, well, probably then he doesn't mean all teaching is ruled out. And I've got three observations on that.

For example, Titus two, three, Paul says that the older women are to teach the younger women. And at the end of the verse, they are to teach what is good. And so train the younger women to love their husbands and children, et cetera.

So there you have a concrete particular instance in Titus, which is very closely related to First Timothy, saying, well, there is at least at least one place where we have women teaching. They teach the younger women, pass on the truth to them about life and about family and about whatever else should be passed on from woman to woman. Second observation, Second Timothy three, 14 tells us that Timothy is to remember from whom he learned the scriptures.

He's using this as an argument for why he should hold fast to the scriptures. And he says, now, remember the kind of person from whom you learned them. And who does he have in mind? Well, we know from chapter one, verse five, he has in mind Eunice and Lois, his mother and his grandmother.

His father was a pagan. He wasn't even a Jew. And so that father didn't have any knowledge of the scriptures and he didn't want to have any.

Evidently, I don't know what happened to him later, but at least from Acts 14. I mean, 16, three, when Timothy was called into Paul's apostolic band, it says his father was a Greek. And that's why he circumcised Timothy in order to avoid any kind of misunderstanding there.

And so he got his teaching from his mother and his grandmother. And Paul even is willing to say, remember from whom you learned the scriptures when you were a boy. So the second kind of teaching that we have that women are doing in pastoral pistols is the teaching of their children.

Here's the third instance. In Acts 18, 26, you have Priscilla and Aquila going to the place of Apollos when they heard Apollos is preaching. And Apollos didn't have a few things right.

So the verse says in Acts 18, 26, when Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos, they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately. They took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately. So the picture we have is a couple goes to a man's house.

Knock, knock. We heard your sermon this morning. Can we talk? And they sit down and she's there and he's there and they start talking.

And there's no statement. She didn't say a word. He did all the talking or that she did all the talking and he didn't say a word.

It's just that together, a husband and a wife went and confronted a man and helped him get some doctrine right here. So a third thing besides women teaching women and women teaching children, you have a couple in some kind of teamwork ministering to a man to get his thinking right. In that kind of small group setting, at least.

Now, what that does for me is cause me to come to this text and read. I do not allow a woman to teach. OK, to give Paul the benefit of the doubt here now that he's not talking out of both sides of his mouth.

I say, OK, you must have in your mind then a particular kind of teaching here. Rather than just a sweeping statement, because there are other instances where you yourself have not only commanded older women to teach younger women and commended Eunice and Lois for doing a good job teaching their child. And you know about Priscilla and Aquila.

So what's what's the focus here, Paul? What are you getting at? How are we supposed to take this word? Are there any parameters to it at all that you can help us with? And I think the best way to handle a question like that is not to say, as some egalitarians would. Well, see, it must have been some kind of special situation here in Ephesus. And there's no real application that you can make to this day, because clearly women talk in the New Testament.

So they should teach in all circumstances today. Now, that seems to me to be a precipitous leap out of the context. What I would suggest is that we stay right here and just ask whether this wouldn't be a more careful and faithful reading.

I don't allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over men. Would it not be fair, then, to suggest that perhaps what Paul means is the kind of teaching I don't permit is the kind that exercises authority over men. So these two things, teach and exercise authority, are so closely unified that they inform each other.

In fact, I'll just give you my progress of thought as I've been working through this over the years. I got to this point and I began to think, OK, if they're closely connected and Paul means for them to inform each other and maybe say one thing here instead of just two things. Is there any evidence for that or clue for that somewhere? And here's what I found.

I found that these two things, teaching and authority, are the very two things in chapter three of First Timothy that distinguish a deacon from an elder. That's interesting. That in the list of qualifications, an elder must be apt to teach, whereas a deacon does not have to be apt to teach.

And elders govern well. I'm getting this now from First Timothy 5:17. But the elders who govern well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

So you have this double function of elders. Namely, they govern or have authority and they teach or preach. And then I come back here and I notice those are the very two things that he proscribes from women.

And I ask him, is that an accident? And my conclusion is, no, it's probably not an accident. And therefore, in all likelihood, what this unit, teach and have authority, mean is this is the description of an elder as opposed to a deacon. And so, in a nutshell, I would say this text means I don't allow a woman to serve as an elder.

Just in a nutshell, that's what I think it means. And by, I mean, if your church, for example, doesn't have elders. Oh, our church doesn't have elders, so there's no problem there.

Women can do anything in our church. Well, that's just a matter of words. You have to ask, what's the faithful counterpart in your setting to an elder? If you don't have any, you've got a defective structure.

You don't have to call them elders if you don't want to. But there needs to be something like that in your church so that it's a biblically structured church. And so it seems to me that if you stay with the context here and you recognize that there is a kind of teaching that's endorsed and commanded to women elsewhere.

And you let this proximity of authority here inform what the teaching is. And then you go to chapter three and you go to chapter five. And you notice that the elders are distinguished from the deacons by those two things.

The elders teach, the elders rule, deacons don't teach, deacons don't have rule. We at Bethlehem, as we pass through a study of this and wrote our constitution about ten years ago. We did something narrowing and broadening.

We created elders. We didn't have elders before, so we now have a council of elders. And we wrote in, these will be spiritual men.

And deacons, who were all men here when I came and had to be men, were said to be women and men. So that's the way our constitution is written now. Elders are men, deacons can be women or men here.

We don't have the deaconess. You can put that word on the end. There's no Greek corresponding to deaconess or deacon.

It's just one word. And so that's the way we have landed. And you know, wherever church you come from, if you're not a Bethlehem person, you've got to work that through in terms of the structures that you have.

So now there's my answer to the second issue. What are the parameters of teaching? I know there are a lot of gray areas here. Lots of gray areas.

I could list them off for you. Intersity chapters, adult Sunday school classes, when does a guy become a man? Can you teach high school? Can you teach university? There's a zillion gray areas. And frankly, I just don't want to fight over those.

As a local body, you've just got to decide where you draw certain lines, and you live with that. You may adjust over the years, and you'll always live with ambiguity. And that's just life.

So I just want to have a few things clear. If we can have a few things clear, you're already in so much trouble already that the ambiguities can just be laid aside. If I can just win just a few key battles of interpretation and say, at least in every church there should be a core, a camaraderie of spiritual, Christlike, humble, servant men who are willing to lay down their lives to lead this church at whatever cost.

And you can hear I'm choosing language that makes it sound real good, because I believe that's exactly the way God wants it to sound. And you have a church full of women who say, I love the leadership of this church. I am so glad the men of this church are of that quality.

I'm glad. And that's the kind of church I want to have. I want to be that kind of man.

I want to assemble around me those kind of elders so that the women in this church flourish under that. And they say, amen, amen. We want that kind of men to lead this church.

And, of course, if we're squelching them and ruining their ministries and preventing them from finding their gifts, then they're not going to be excited about that at all, and we're not doing our job. But I think in a good church, godly, mature, biblical women really thrive when led by humble, godly, teachable, open, strong, visionary, Christlike men. So that's what our aim is.

Whether we attain it or not, I'm not sure. We work at it. Third observation.

What about submission and authority? Basically, what I do with these two words, authority and submission, is exactly the same thing I do with headship and submission in the home. And I think there's a correlation there that moving back and forth between home and church should be a real natural feel for people. I know that there are teachers.

For example, Roger Nicole. I love Roger Nicole's theology. He's Calvinist through and through.

And on this issue, we part company halfway into it. And I had him come speak here at one of our pastor's conference. Roger Nicole argues exactly what I argue in Ephesians 5. In the family, man is head.

Woman affirms that headship, flourishes in it. And then when he gets to this text, he goes haywire. My interpretation, haywire.

Because he just argues this is local, this is cultural, and this doesn't have any abiding value. And so women can be pastors and women can be elders. So I asked him.

I asked him at a table sitting in that room about 10 years ago. I said, so your wife must submit to you at home and follow you as her leader. But she could be the pastor of your church.

And he said, yes, no problem. I think that's a problem. But you need to know there are people that don't think that's a problem.

And so now, you know, I don't think Roger has written a book on this. He may have written articles on it. You can find him.

He's an oddball because most I say an oddball in the good sense in that he believes half of the complementarity thing. Whereas most egalitarians sweep it all away. That is, this text goes and Ephesians 5 goes.

And all you have left is mutuality. No hierarchy at all in terms of headship and submission. So here, all I want to say is that this authority here is the authority of a Christlike servant leader.

This is servant leadership, not authoritarianism or coercive or suppressive or manipulative or unhearing or unlistening or unteachable, uncorrectable, above rebuke. None of those things should be in this because

elders are sinners in the Bible. This book right here in chapter five makes a provision for rebuking an elder.

And then submissiveness would be the same thing, the enthusiastic support of that leadership, not the mindless support of it, because probably, in my view anyway, in the congregation life of the church, it is the whole body of believers who wind up doing the discipline. If there has to be some done on a wayward, out of control elder. So here's my definition of authority.

Authority refers to the divine calling of spiritual gifted men to take primary responsibility. Notice the word primary again, as with husbands, not sole primary responsibility as elders for Christlike servant leadership and teaching in the church. That's my definition of authority.

Here's my definition of submission in the church. Submission refers to the divine calling of the rest of the church, both men and women, to honor and affirm the leadership and teaching of the elders and to be equipped by it for the hundreds and hundreds of various ministries available to men and women in the service of Christ. That last point is real important to me.

For men and women who have a heart to minister, save souls, heal broken lives, resist the devil, meet needs, there are fields of opportunity that are simply endless. And God intends for the whole church to be on active duty. Nobody, male or female, slouching around doing nothing.

Nobody at home wasting their lives watching soaps and reruns while the world burns. You know, one of the saddest things, and I say this, I hope I can say it carefully so you don't misunderstand me. One of the saddest things, which is now being reversed over the last 20 years as women have been told over and over again by feminists, that the only respectable life is in the marketplace.

One of the saddest things about that, and a diminishing of the value of homemaking and mothering, is that a massive resource of creative, energetic, volunteerism vanished. Women ran things once upon a time. That is, they undertook all kinds of creative service ministries in community.

And lifted the whole life of a community. Because they had, if they were really effective in their parenting, even if they had five or ten kids, they had time. If they were good time managers, they had time.

And they could have the older daughters take care of the little kids. And they could take two, three hours in the middle of the day and make something happen in the community. Get somebody elected, or get homes mothers helped, or get drugs out of this neighborhood.

And then they got sold this bill of goods that the only respectable way to spend a life is making money at a desk somewhere. Or in front of a computer, or whatever. And they were exhausted when they came home.

And they had the kids, now the daycare, and they feel guilty because they want to spend time with the kids. And they can hardly handle what they're doing. And their husbands are dog-tired and are at each other.

And this is not your great life. This is not wonderful suburbia. You just can afford a home.

Then you've got to keep working to pay the mortgage on. And so you're enslaved. Well, I'm just so thankful that a lot of women have gotten the bonus to stand up and say, the superwoman was a bill of

goods.

And there is a noble calling in homemaking and community life and church life that is so rich and so full. And some women are writing about it. And more women, like the women in this room right now, need to get on a soapbox and preach it.

Preach it. P-R-E-A-C-H. Preach it so that more younger women coming along dream their own dreams and don't feel like they're coerced in their college years to say, what are you planning on? I'd kind of like to get married and make a home for a guy that I admire.

Now, we've got a system in this culture that is just broken. It doesn't work because a woman can't count on that happening. There's no parents who can make that happen.

In some cultures, you can make that happen. So every woman must plan her life that way. And I know the dreams of many.

They wish that the long term were, I would like to find a man whose life I can pour my life into and raise a family and make a home and breed radical disciples for Jesus and be freed in the community to use my gifts at church and home and community to make all kinds of good things happen and win people to Christ and heal the broken. I mean, that is a noble calling. And I wish there were ways we could make the system work better.

If you have ideas, let me know. So I could go one or two ways right here in our last two, three, four, five minutes together. I could tell you what I think verse 15 means or the argument in verses 13 and 14, or I could open it for questions.

You know, I really haven't even done 13 and 14, let alone 15, have I? I think I better sum this up, because to leave you without that argument right there is irresponsible. What does this mean? Four, it was Adam who was first created and then Eve, and it was not Adam who deceived. So he's got two arguments.

The reason I do not think this text is culturally limited is because his arguments are rooted in creation and the fall, not in any cultural situation. I'm not persuaded by any of the sophisticated arguments to the effect that in Ephesus there was a problem or that problem. And so none of this really applies to today because it only applies to Ephesus because his argument.

Four, it was Adam who was created first and then Eve. So I take you back four weeks. I lay my argument before you.

I gave you 11 arguments, I think, nine or 11 arguments. It was nine. Why? I think this is not an off-the-wall statement that when Paul read the first three chapters of Genesis, he saw a pattern of leadership before and after the fall.

And he's saying here that pattern of leadership establishes this priority of the church being led by men and women and men following those leaders. The second argument, and it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression, is more difficult. Historically, and you can see why, that's been taken to mean women are more deceivable than men and therefore need to be led by men at the spiritual level of the church's life.

That may be true. I suspect men are more deceivable in some ways and women are more deceivable in some ways. I suspect women can see through certain scams that men fall for and men can see through certain scams that women fall for.

I suspect that's the case. You studied very carefully and you made proper distinctions. And if that's the meaning here, what Paul would be saying then is on a certain kind of deceivability scale, we need the men leading the doctrinal charge of the church.

However, I'm just not persuaded that that's what this text means because of the exegesis I developed of the fall four weeks ago. And I know I'm expecting a lot for you to remember it. But you remember what happened.

Satan approaches the woman. The man is there. He's listening and he's not intervening.

He's silent and God criticizes him for being silent and listening later in chapter three. And so Satan assaults God's intended leadership of the man by ignoring him and addressing the woman. She and he fall for it.

And when they fall for it, the reversal of this order, I don't allow them to teach you have authority. Creates a collapse of the right ordering of life at home and in God's people. So might it not be then that verse 14 means something like this.

Let me see if I can just read my paraphrase list. I use too many words. Here's what I would say.

Suggest Adam was not deceived. What's that mean? Parenthesis. That is, Adam was not approached by the deceiver and did not carry on direct dealings with the deceiver.

Adam was not deceived. But the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. What's that mean? That is, she was the one who took up dealings with the deceiver and was lit and was led through her direct interaction with him into deception and transgression.

So I'm saying that the point here may be, and I'm inclined to think that it is, is that when Satan assaulted God's divine ordering of things, he did so such that he put the woman in the place of the interactor with the deceiver. He approached the woman. You deal with me.

I don't tell you I'm deceiver, but I am deceiver. I want you to interact with me. I'm not going to interact with him.

And she did that. And with the man, he didn't interact with him. He just stood there and listened.

And she fell into transgression and the man fell with her. But the reason he points it out as relevant for this, the woman falling into transgression, it was because it was Satan's assault on this ordering, the leadership of the man that brought the whole thing crashing down. Now, if that's not what it means, then I'm cast back on the traditional interpretation, which I'm willing to be cast back onto.

But I think in either case, it is warranted from the original Genesis situation rather than any cultural situation in Ephesus. One last comment about verse 15. But women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith and love and holiness with discretion.

And I'll close with this. What does that mean? What does saved through childbearing mean? Women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith and love and holiness with discretion. I put the Greek up here.

Women will be saved. This is the word saved. Through diatase technogonias.

Through childbearing. What does that mean? We'll be saved through childbearing. Here's what I think it means, and I based some of it on this analogy with 1 Corinthians 3.15. The situation, I think, is women contemplate the pain of childbirth in that culture which was a thousand times worse than it is today.

And they read Genesis 3 where it says, as a result of the curse, women shall give birth in pain. So they feel, this is judgment. This is God's judgment on me.

And women died in childbirth. Died in childbirth. Lots more than they do today.

Today in other cultures, they die in childbirth much more frequently. So this pain thing and this curse thing weighed heavily, I think, on women. Is God against me? Does he care about me? Will he save me? Save me? Does he have any place for women in his salvation? And so through childbirth, this through here is like fire.

Through fire. In spite of childbirth. I'm entering into the curse, into judgment it feels like.

And will I make it through? Will God condemn me? Is this a sign that he condemns me? Will I make it through? Then the text says, you will be saved right through the burden of the curse of childbearing. If you believe. You're saved by faith.

If you love. If you're holy. And manifest that in discretion.

Now, first Corinthians 3:15 is the only other place in the New Testament where this verb and this preposition occur in a similar way. And the context is he will be saved. Thus, as through fire.

So the through fire is a judgment like testing and you make it through. And so childbirth would be a judgment like testing. And you make it through.

If you have faith and love and holiness. And I just put faith and love and holiness and gave verses to say that's no different than the way men get saved. Men are saved if they have faith and love and holiness with discretion.

All those three words are made conditions of our salvation. Romans 5.1. By faith that we say or just we justify by faith. First Corinthians 16.22. If you have no love for the Lord, you're going to be accursed.

And Romans 6.22. That holiness that leads to eternal life. So let me see if I can end this and then stand here afterwards. For any of you want to come up and ask questions that I didn't get to.

You'd hoped I would. Or clarifications or applications. I'll be happy to stay as long as you want tonight.

But what I hope has happened in these four or five weeks we've had together. Is that you've seen at least a plausible and credible interpretation of texts. And a paradigm of ministry that I hope is not off-putting.

Because I think God wants men and women to feel excited about headship in marriage and spiritual leadership of men in the church. I think he wants it to feel freeing to us and liberating and mobilizing for

men and women. So that nobody goes out of this room or out of the church saying I'm cramped and I can't do what I really feel I'm called to do.

Father in heaven, take I pray my efforts to push this into a very small space of time. And refine it in people's minds and hearts I pray. And make us a kind of people here at Bethlehem and the other churches represented here.

Such that we build marriages and we build a camaraderie between men and women. In ministry in our churches that are so wonderfully mobilizing and liberating and freeing and refreshing. And fruit bearing and God glorifying that we just don't spend a lot of time worrying about the steps of the dance.

Grant that the dance would be so beautiful that the world would see and say well I thought headship and submission was an ugly thing. I thought the leadership of men was an abusive thing. But here I see it's refreshing and rings deep in my soul with the way I'm created to be.

Lord I pray that would be the effect far and wide for the sake of your name. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

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