

MEN & WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

1 Timothy 2.8-15

What grade would we give our culture on male and female relations? Have we been trending in the right or wrong direction? Where is the template for healthy maleness and femaleness?

When the boys in the children's ministry ask "what does it mean to be a man", what do we say? When the girls in the children's ministry ask "what does it mean to be a woman", what do we say?

Part of the reason Paul wrote Timothy was so that "you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God" (1 Timothy 3.15). This is instruction for Christians in the life of the local church. There is a call for all of God's people to a submissiveness to His will (Cf. Ephesians 5.24; James 4.7). God has made the world with order, and we are to act appropriately within His design.

Men and Women are complementary from creation

God created humanity dimorphically (in two sexes). Men and women are "created in God's image", but they are neither identical nor interchangeable (Genesis 1.26-27, Cf. "Ruined but Redeemable: Male & Female" sermon from January 18, 2026).

These two biological sexes are complementary, meaning they are different yet "fit together" (Genesis 2.18-25).

Since maleness and femaleness are anchored in God's created order, we can appeal to a male nature and a female nature (1 Peter 3.1-7).

God desires men to look and behave like men and women to look and behave like women (1 Corinthians 11.2-16).

We are witnessing efforts to shatter God's design. Ideas like "drag queen story hours" and biological men playing women's sports are a protest against the "givenness of things". This complementarity is to be lived out in the local church.

Men and Women model complementarity in the local church

There are ways men and women behave in the church that reinforce God's good design. Men are to pray rather than act in anger (1 Timothy 2.8). Women are to dress modestly, focusing on inner beauty rather than adornment (1 Timothy 2.9-10; Cf. 1 Peter 3.3-4).

In conformity to God's design, women ought not "teach or exercise authority over a man" (1 Timothy 2.12). Women are to learn theology and teach other women and children (1 Timothy 5.10; 2 Timothy 1.5, 3.15; Titus 2.3f.).

Paul justifies his position by going to the creation and the Fall, making this command transcultural and transtemporal (1 Timothy 2.13-14). That is to say, the principle of male leadership in the church is not bound by cultures or times.

In saying that Eve sinned first, Paul is highlighting the subversion of the roles. Eve led Adam into sin and Adam failed to lead his wife in the way of the Lord. When women exercise spiritual authority over men, it stifles God's natural order.

While Paul's statement that women "will be saved through childbearing" raises many questions, contextually this affirms the normal way that women make a godly impact in the world (1 Timothy 2.15). Paul was pro-family and pro-motherhood against the false teachers (1 Timothy 4.1-3, 5.10, 14). He reaffirmed God's created order and the distinctive calling of women.

Complementarity serves God's mission

Living-out God's design will lead to the enrichment of the Christian life. More importantly, when men and women operate within God's design we illustrate the Gospel. We see this with the word "then", linking 1 Timothy 2.1-7 with vv. 8-15. Modeling our roles serves the mission.

Key Ideas: We will find joy and blessing when we embrace God's design.

Application Questions:

What is the overall purpose of 1 Timothy 2.8-15? What is Paul trying to implement in the local church?

In this area of men and women, how does the world want to shape the church?

How would we define a healthy Christian masculinity? How would we define a healthy Christian femininity?

What is the danger of a strictly literal application of these verses? What is the danger of dismissing these verses as something confined to 1st century AD culture?

DeYoung, Men and Women in the Church

Grudem, Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism, pp. 171-191

Kostenberger & Schreiner, Women in the Church: An Interpretation

& Application of 1 Timothy 2.9-15