

# The Role of Women in the Church

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[0:00] In the 32 years of teaching, this is the first time I thought about maybe just skipping an area of scripture.

! And I believe, of course, an exposition verse by verse. I wouldn't do that. But so I'm going to just boldly tell you all that tonight, and we're being recorded, this will be online, I'm going to talk about the role of women in the church.

I'm Mike Dursham. I'm one of the elders here at Highland Park. Preach, Mike. Preach. Preach on, Mike. There has, for centuries, been a great debate about what role women play in the church. Most of those debates are culturally orientated and not scripturally orientated.

Scripture is pretty ignored on the topic. Human reasoning comes into play. And what really comes into play is what is currently in vogue. What does the culture say for the day?

[1:26] Well, we're not going to do that. We're going to look at Scripture. We're going to examine what God says on this very important topic. Now, again, I remind you that Paul is instructing his son in the faith, Timothy, on the great truths that he's going to need to lead a church.

And because God inspires these words, written a couple thousand years ago, they are applicable in all generations.

They didn't just apply to the first century. They apply to all generations, including ours. So tonight we're going to examine the role of women in the 21st century church.

And there are many churches that struggle over gender roles within their walls. There are churches in this town that have and do experience struggle and strife within their church.

Interestingly, there are very few churches. These are some of the churches, and I'm aware of them. I'm not going to mention them, but I know where there's debate, or at least they've caved in to the culture.

[2:51] And they are churches that are also in the grip of false doctrine and false leadership. So they kind of go hand in glove. Now, we've already seen the role of men in the church, or at least got a glimpse of it.

And we studied that the last several weeks. Men are called to a life of evangelistic praying. We do more than that. But we've just studied evangelistic praying.

Now Paul is going to turn his attention to women. And I really appreciate the way Dr. MacArthur outlined this in the verses we're going to look at in the second chapter of 1 Timothy.

Because the scriptures talk about relating to women in the church. Their appearance. Their attitude. Their testimony.

Their role. Their design. Their contribution. All that from John MacArthur's commentary. And the first thing we're going to hit tonight is the appearance of women. In 1 Timothy chapter 2 verses the first part of 9.

[3:57] And the last part of 9. Kind of 9A and 9C I guess. Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing.

Not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments. Very interesting. I really focus on the costly garments.

I buy my suit from Tom James. And I haven't bought one in years because I don't wear them anymore. And this kid came to see me. They wanted to sell me a suit. And he said, now here's our catalog with the top of the line.

They start at \$6,500. I said, son, if I was worth \$100 million, I wouldn't buy that suit. I would be in sin to be walking around in a suit that expensive while people are starving.

You know, I wouldn't do it. My translation has modestly and discreetly. Yeah, we're going to get there. Yeah, we're going to cover modest and discreet.

[5:00] Mike. Mike. Mike. I'm sorry, Mike. Yeah, Mike. Now, we start out there with the word likewise.

And it's used to transition from verse 8 into a new aspect on the subject of roles in the church. And already having discussed men, Paul now turns his attention to the conduct of women. Adorn is an interesting Greek word. I'll mispronounce it, but it's still interesting. Cosmeo, from which we get the English word cosmetic. Kind of makes sense. It means to arrange, to put in order, or make ready. Now, I'm not going to talk a lot about makeup on women in the church. Let me just say if they need it, dab it on. You know, I mean, that's my theory. But Paul is telling us that a woman must arrange herself properly to join with God's people in worship.

[6:06] A woman is to come to church properly dressed and prepared for worship. It's good advice for men, too, isn't it? When she is appropriately adorned on the outside, it serves as a reflection on the adornment of her heart.

Paul mentions braided hair, which may take to mean her hairstyle. It would be self-defeating for a woman to properly adorn herself for corporate worship and then totally ignore her hair. You know, we live in a time when a lot of women do that. I don't know what they call it, but they come out of the shower and just leave it the way it is, you know. I don't do that. I comb mine. All three hairs.

If they do that, if they ignore their hair, what's going to happen? They're going to become the center of attention for men and women in the church.

And that's wrong. That's wrong. That will detract from worship, from the preaching of the word. The reference there we read to gold and pearls.

[7:19] Most commentators think that refers to the women in that particular culture who usually would wear their hair with those things interwoven.

They would take gold and pearls and weave it in their hair, again, bringing attention to themselves. And that's not a good thing.

Now, there's nothing wrong with owning jewelry. Many of the women in the Old Testament wore jewelry. But jewelry should not be worn so that one could flaunt their wealth.

Paul is forbidding, for men and women, preoccupation with self in the place of worship.

In the place of worship. The bottom line is a woman should examine her motives and her goals in the way she dresses for church.

[8:21] By dressing appropriately, she brings honor to God, her husband, and herself. But to do so in order to bring attention to herself or to flaunt her wealth, her status in the culture, in the society, or in the worst case scenario, to allure a man is sin.

It's sin. Not to be done within the confines of the church. Now, Mark mentioned modestly and discreetly. There are two attitudes that characterize a woman's appearance in worship.

The Greek word for modestly is used only here in the New Testament. And I discovered there's something interesting in the authorized King James Version.

It used the word shamefacedness. Wow. That's cool. I even looked it up. It's in there. We don't use that every day in our conversation.

But shamefacedness. I even typed it in, and the spell check said it was okay. Pretty amazing. A godly woman should be ashamed if she distracted someone from worship.

[9:41] That would be shameful. That would be shameful. Or created in them some lustful thoughts by her manner of conduct or dress or whatever.

No Christian woman would ever want to be the source of temptation because of the way she either dressed or behaved. Just would not want to do that.

Someone who is discreet is someone who exercises self-control. And this is especially true when it comes to sexuality.

It is a great Christian virtue to exercise control so as not to elevate the passions of another.

Even Plato in his book, The Republic, which I never read but the girl next to me did so I was okay, said that discretion was one of the great virtues of life. And that comes from a very secular source, you know, Plato in the Republic.

[10:44] Well, what about the testimony of women in verse 10? But rather, and I'm beginning all these in mid-sentence, but rather by means of good works as befits women making a claim to godliness.

Now, most women in the church today, I think, would profess a level of godliness. But profession is one thing and possession is quite another.

Do they possess godliness? It says, anyone making such a profession must back it up with evidence. One's demeanor and appearance must support such a profession.

It's got to be supported by conduct and appearance. Paul says, good works must back up any profession of godliness.

Now, that use of that particular word, good works, which, by the way, is one word in the Greek language, you know, we know about good works. We talk about good works.

[11:51] We study good works. But this means it must be genuinely good and not merely good for appearance sake, that it originates in our heart, in our spirit.

Christian women make a public profession of love for Christ when they pursue godliness. They are telling the world, I'm a follower of Christ.

And, you know, we've got some great women that do that. I mean, and a lot of them are the wives of men in this very room. I mean, I'm not going to start naming names because I'll leave someone out inadvertently, but just looking around this room, no person, man or woman, can claim to love, honor, and worship God and disregard what his word says concerning behavior.

Can't do that. God has a design for women in the church, and those who pursue such a design give evidence of being one with Christ and a willingness to honor him in all things.

And, you know, this is where our society has totally blown it. The liberal church has totally blown it. But this is honoring to Christ. It's a testimony. It's a testimony of women.

[13:14] Well, let's get to the heart of it, the role of women. Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

Let me remind you, I'm labor. That was written by management, upper management. Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness, but I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

I wonder if Joyce Meyer and Paula White have read that verse of Scripture. And how would they deal with that? I have no clue because I don't watch them. Here, Paul defines the role of women as learners as opposed to teachers.

Now, don't women teach? Yeah, we'll get to that. But here he is defining them as learners as opposed to teachers during public worship.

Now, clearly, Paul, by inspiration, is instructing women to be learners as opposed to teachers.

[14:31] This was radical thinking in his day. You can't imagine how radical this was in his day, which may not be readily apparent to us in our day.

Don't jump to a conclusion. Let me tell you why it was radical. In the first century, the surprising statement here is not a prohibition placed on women from becoming teachers, but the radical thinking was Paul encouraging women to be learners.

That was radical in his day. He was encouraging them to learn at the feet of a teacher the word of God.

He wanted them and encouraged them to receive instruction. The prevailing attitude among men in ancient times, on the Jewish side of the house, on the Greek side of the house, was for women to be shut out of the learning process.

Shut them out. That's why it's such radical thinking. And it's radical not because Paul was prohibiting women, but because he's allowing women and encouraging them to become learners.

[15:57] And, you know, I'm always disgusted because Paul gets slammed by the liberal church for his attitude, quote, unquote, toward women. And they don't see this.

They don't see this in the apostles. It's like that in some countries even now. Oh, I've been in them. I've been in them. Yeah. Oh, yeah. I've been in them. The young girls don't get to go to school. No. No. No. The construction here is that Paul, and, of course, ultimately the Holy Spirit, is not requesting women to receive instruction.

It is in the form of a command. They're commanding. He is commanding women to be taught. So guess where that ultimate command is directed at?

It's men because they're the teachers. So Paul here is issuing a command. Women must be learners. Well, that falls on our shoulders, doesn't it?

[16:59] It falls on our shoulders. Don't ever do what I did one night. I'm watching a football game, and Diane comes and asks me something about Scripture. And, man, it was a tight game. I'm sitting

there saying, yeah, I'm not sure.

I'll get back to you on that. And she stood there for a minute, and then she says, the Bible told me to ask you, and I've asked. And she went downstairs. I felt about that big.

I'll tell you, as soon as that game was over, I went down there and helped her out. She totally cut me off.

It was too late. She looked up Jonathan's work on that subject. So here he is commanding women to be taught, and that was speaking of the order in the church in which learning could take place. Why is all this so important? Because the knowledge of God, which comes from teaching, is a stimulus to true worship. It's a stimulus to true worship.

[18:03] And worship, men, is our first priority. We're to worship God in spirit and in truth. It should be obvious to us that women should be taught God's word.

Who would deny them such an opportunity? It's vitally important. In Christianity, men and women are spiritually equal and responsible for living up to the commands given.

Listen to the words of Peter, chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. 1 Peter. Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.

That's to men and women. To young and old. But what may be obvious to us was not obvious to those with a Jewish background back 2,000 years ago.

Women in that culture were not held in high regard. Remember the prayer, you know, thank you God that I was not born a Gentile slave or especially a woman.

[19:17] They were not held in high regard. Women were not encouraged to be learners. Most rabbis would not teach women. They wouldn't do it.

We're in Acts here on Sunday morning and we just had Paul go into a town, sit down by the river, and it was all women, totally women.

And they came to him and said, we know you're a traveling rabbi. Would you come teach us? And he did. He did. So where did the Jewish attitude originate?

Women shouldn't be learners. Keep them down on the farm, you know. Let me tell you where it did not originate, okay? It did not originate in the passages of the Old Testament.

It didn't do it. Consider some of these facts concerning women under the Old Covenant. The Mosaic Law was given to all Israel, men and women.

[20:16] Both men and women were to teach their children. Both were protected under the law.

Women had the right to inherit from their husbands, from their families. They could inherit. Both genders participated in the various feasts of Israel.

The Nazarite vow was open equally to both men and women. You could read that in number six.

That applied to men and women. Women were involved with worship.

And many times God dealt directly with women. Directly. I think there's four of them in the genealogy of Christ.

Now, all of this does not mean that men and women had the same roles. They didn't have. They actually had very different roles. For instance, there were no queens in Israel.

[21:26] Israel never had a queen. Now, Bible scholars in here are going to scream and say, wait a minute. There was Queen Athaliah. That's in 2 Kings and both Chronicles.

But she was a false queen. She was a usurper. And she was a murderer. She had a bunch of her family killed. So that she could determine who was going to ascend to the throne.

Deborah, you may recall, was the only female judge of Israel. But if you read that, that was under a very special circumstance.

There wasn't any male leadership available. And God used her to accomplish his sovereign purpose. Deborah, at one time, was offered to lead a military command, a campaign, and she refused.

She wouldn't do it. That's the role of a man. Don't get me started on women in combat. I am sorry. I'm old school. Don't get me started. There were no women priests.

[22:35] No woman authored a book of the Old Testament. No woman had prophetic ministry such as the male prophets of Israel. There were three women mentioned as prophetesses.

Well, that's a hard word. But they only verbalized what was already written prophecy. They didn't prophesy. They just read what God had already prophesied.

There was one woman who was called a prophet, Noadiah. But she was a false prophet. Nehemiah 6:14 brands her as a false prophet.

And no woman in the Old Testament had an ongoing role of preaching and teaching. It wasn't there. So when we come to the New Testament, we find that it is like the Old Testament.

It teaches spiritual equality. And, you know, let's face it. This is where a lot of men and some churches get off. They go off track. There is spiritual equality but differing roles for men and women.

[23:44] Again, we appeal to Paul, book of Galatians, chapter 3, verse 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free man. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ.

Can't get any plainer than that. Now, some in the church have tried to twist this passage into justifying women into leadership roles that belong to a man.

But we must keep that verse in context. By reading the verses immediately preceding what I just read to you in Galatians, we learn that Paul is speaking about salvation.

The salvation of our Lord is open to all, to the Jews, to the Greeks, to the slaves, to the free, to males, to females. Because when we're brought into the body, we are one in Christ.

So this is a whole section on salvation. Now, having listed the Old Testament view of women, let me now list the New Testament view of women.

[24:52] And this is partial. The first person Jesus ever revealed himself to as Messiah was a Samaritan woman living in sin. Remember that? The woman at the well in Sychar.

We studied that in here. The woman at the well. First person he revealed himself to as the Messiah. She said, I know Messiah is coming.

And he said, I who speak to you am he. Jesus healed women. Jesus taught women. Women ministered to Jesus and the disciples.

Jesus' first post-resurrection appearance was to women. You know why he appeared to women and not men? Make it believable. Nope.

The men were in hiding. That may be too. But they were scared to death. They were hiding. They didn't want to get arrested. The women went right to the tomb. They were there.

[25:50] The women were there. The men weren't. Men and women were both involved in prayer. The fruit of the spirit applies equally to men and women. Love, joy, peace, patience.

The first recorded convert on the continent of Europe was a woman. Paul Letter. Lydia. Lydia.

My class yesterday was led. Prayer and my class yesterday was led by a woman. Trinity. Faiths from your class came in. Pray for us as you well know. Now this does not mean that under the new covenant women do not have different roles than do men.

The fact is they do have different roles. Here are a few examples from the New Testament. There were no women pastor teachers in the New Testament.

There were no women evangelists. There were no female elders. There is no record of a woman preaching a sermon or teaching a lesson in the New Testament.

[27:02] Women were allowed to pray and speak the word but not in the assembly of the church. They did that in private and primarily to their children.

How many of you guys in here, the first time you ever heard about Jesus was from your mother? Yeah. My mom.

I remember it well. So what are the women to do when the church gathers? They're listening to men teach. That happens in here, in this class, every Sunday morning, except maybe Rachel who's talking.

She's been doing that for a long time, hasn't she, Mike? They're to listen to the men. They're commanded to do so quietly and submissively.

Now, I'm going to give you my favorite phrase. I've been saying this for a year. Years and years. Women are to be silent in church.

[28:08] So are most men. It's just a fact. Who speaks to us on Sunday morning? The ministers. Jonathan through the music.

Pastor through expository preaching. Chris through announcements. But none of the men except Wes are out there saying anything. Wes is the only exception.

Hallelujah. I mean, let's face it. And I've used that phrase so often. You know, women should be silent in church and so should most men.

We don't have the... Now, our charismatic friends, I mean, it is, you know, and it's not orderly. It's not done in an orderly fashion. Read 1 Corinthians 14, the last verse there. And it's to be done in an orderly fashion. No one is to speak out and interfere with the exposition of the word of God.

[29:10] In fact, I'll tell you something you may not know. To interfere in a church service in Oklahoma is a violation of God's commands and of the state's commands.

We have laws against that. And you can be arrested for disrupting what the law calls a religious service. We got a person in there that can do that.

And almost did one Sunday, except the guy left the church before I knew who it was. Billy Dye came out here and fled into the daylight.

But it is a criminal violation in Oklahoma to interfere with a religious service. Now, once that gets to the U.S. Supreme Court, I don't know. I don't know.

Paul adds that women are forbidden from exercising authority over a man. Now, there's not anything in there that says men are to be domineering or abusive.

[30:16] It's not in there. It doesn't mean that men are to domineer or to abuse their wives. It is a confirmation that the elders rule the church.

That is primarily the chief shepherd of the local church, the pastor, who is an elder. And we refer to him as the first among equals. He's the chief shepherd of the church.

None of these rule out women from teaching in an appropriate setting. There were women teachers in the New Testament, but it was always done in a private setting.

They didn't teach men. They certainly didn't teach men doctrine. Women are required by command to teach other women. Remember that?

The older women are to teach the younger women. And I don't know if that's really older in age so much as it is spiritual maturity. But women are required. They're commanded to teach other women.

[31:21] I think women can teach young children. They better or they won't get taught. You know, we've got a Wes who's willing to do that. But even younger, you know, the little bitty.

Diane was down in the nursery yesterday. But I think women can teach very young children, male or female. Now, it really boils down to the leadership within the church.

And Satan has generated a great lie that women should have the most prominent roles of leadership in the church. And, of course, this is the drift of our culture.

This is the whole drift of our culture in the military and law enforcement. And you just name it. This is the direction we're going. If you have never served in a leadership role in the church, it isn't a cakewalk.

It isn't a cakewalk. Leaders have a heavy burden to bear. I remember a woman in front of me asking Dr. McBride once, why couldn't she be this and this and this and this?

[32:33] And, you know, she would do all these leadership things. And he said, because you're a woman. You're above all that. God has put you on a pedestal. That was his response to her.

Protecting women from that is not punishment privilege. It isn't a cakewalk. It isn't a cakewalk. What about the design of women?

For it was Adam who was first created and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived. But the woman being quite deceived fell into transgression.

Paul, very important point. Paul establishes the role of women not based upon the fall, but based upon the divine order of creation.

He says, Adam was first created. Now, he's writing the words of the Holy Spirit here. God made women after men as a helpmate.

[33:40] The priority of man's role is obvious. In the fall, the woman was deceived. She had removed herself from the protective care and leadership of her husband, who wasn't providing it at the time, and fell into temptation.

I used to like to say, well, you know, Adam was like four counties over plowing, and the serpent came in. Well, the Bible says, and Adam, who was with her, did eat.

He watched all that. He didn't step in. He didn't shut it down and say, you're not going to do this to my wife. And that's what should have happened. Adam, the fall was a violation of God's command, but it was also a violation of God's appointed role for the sexes, for men and women.

And neither should we make Adam a hero in all this. He didn't step up. He didn't protect his wife from the serpent. Eve was deceived.

Adam chose to disobey. He made a conscious decision. Yeah, I'm going to eat. And he disobeyed. [35:00] That is why the fall in the garden is referred to as Adam's sin. You never hear of Eve's sin.

At least I haven't. It's always referred to as Adam's sin. Because he chose, he made a conscious decision to enter into disobedience.

I'm sure I'm the one in this class that's ever done that. The headship of man was God's plan from the beginning. Man alone bears the responsibility for his success or failure.

If you want to see the wisdom of God's design and the tragic failures of humans, look to the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapter 3.

You'll never plumb the depths of humanity. Of the fall of humanity. And look what it is produced in our day.

[35:57] The most anti-Christian atmosphere in the history of the world. All over the world. What about the contribution of women?

But women shall be preserved. Oh, I like that word. Women who were in the fall, deceived, convinced her husband to eat, and he chose to do so.

But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctify with self-restraint.

Now, I'm glad Diane's not here because she'd be on the edge of her seat when I'm going to say next. So I'm going to close. We've still got a few minutes to go. But I'm going to close.

Rather than steal from John MacArthur and parse words, I'm going to read from John MacArthur. Because when I read this, I think he nails it. I really think he nails it.

[37:07] Paul teaches here that although a woman precipitated the fall, And women bear that responsibility, yet they may be preserved from that stigma through childbearing.

The rescue, the delivery, the freeing of women from the stigma of having led the race into sin happens when they bring up a righteous seed.

Very, very important here. What a perfect counter. Women are far from being second-class citizens because they have the primary responsibility of rearing godly children.

I also remember Steve Farrar. I've met Steve a couple times. And his wife, you know, he came home and she'd been to this meeting with these women. And they were presidents of banks and they were vice presidents.

And she said, you know, what do I tell them I do? He said, you tell them you're at home preparing the next generation of leadership for this country. Because that's what she did.

[38:24] That's what she did. Women rear or to rear godly children. Let's face it. Let's face it. Mothers spend far more time with their children than do their fathers and thus have the greater influence.

Fathers cannot know the intimate relationship with their children that the mother establishes from pregnancy, birth, infancy, and early childhood.

I've seen that in 42 years in law enforcement. We'll have a man and his wife come in and said our teenager beat up his mother.

And she's got black eyes and everything else. And my first question is, well, what did you do? Well, I was afraid of him. I just sat there. Well, my dad wasn't afraid of me and I'm not afraid of my boys. And then we'd say, well, we're not going to file the charges. Why not? Because your wife's not going to testify against you. Oh, yeah, I will. No, you won't.

[39:29] There's something there. She held him in her tummy. And men, we don't know the depth of that. We just don't.

It's there. It is there. Paul's point is that while a woman may have led the race into sin, women have the privilege of leading the race out of sin and into godliness.

Now, how does God think about women? High and lifted up. This does not mean that God wants all women to bear children.

Some, he doesn't even want to be married. Paul speaks here in general terms, the pain associated with childbirth was the punishment for the woman's sin.

You can read that in Genesis 3.16. But the joy and privilege of child rearing delivers women from the stigma of that sin. For women to reverse the blight that has befallen them in the fall in the

garden and fulfill their calling, those who are married and have children need to raise a godly seed. [40:48] How do they do that? They must continue in faith and love where their salvation really rests. And they must continue in sanctity, that's holiness, with self-restraint.

Now, we come full circle because you go back to verse 9. That's the word discreet, self-restraint. It is the very appearance, demeanor, and behavior demanded of believing women in the church that becomes their deliverance from any semblance of inferior status as they live out their lives in a godly manner and raise godly children.

What a testimony. We had Jim Merritt in this church. He's later president of the Southern Baptist Convention, now in Georgia preaching, catching him on TV.

Stayed at his house for one night when I was in the FBI going to New York City. Jim said, I am standing before you, a minister of the gospel, because my grandmother prayed for years on her knees that God would raise up among her children or grandchildren a minister of the gospel. And she died five years before I was born. I always remember that. He said, I'm a preacher because my grandmother went to the Lord and said, raise up a preacher.

[42:10] In this passage, we see how God has perfectly balanced the role of the sexes. Men are to be the leaders in the church and in the family. What happens when a man doesn't lead in the family?

Not good. The women assume that role. They become the spiritual leader. I mean, if she's unevenly yoked, she can become the spiritual force in that family.

Not lording it over the guy. Women are kept from any accusation of inferiority through the godly influence they have in their lives with their precious children.

Now, catch this, and we'll close. For the church to depart from this divine order is to perpetuate the disaster of the fall.

And that's what's going on in this world and in the church today. Maybe we're coming full circle.

[43:17] We're standing before the tree with the serpent being enticed to do it his way instead of God's way. I always remember Phil Donahue.

Didn't like him. Still don't. But he had... I was flipping channels and he had this show where he was talking about how the Bible and Christianity were abusive to women, second-class citizens, and he was getting obscure passages in the Old Testament, you know.

And I'm screaming at the television. And I'm saying, go to the cross. Go to the cross. Because the first thing Jesus did on the cross was make provision for his mother.

He got John up there and he said, mother, behold your son. John, behold your mother. I'm going to die here and you're going to have to take care of my mom. That is Christianity.

That is God. That was the God of the universe hanging on that cross making provision for his earthly mother.