

Royer: We can read in both the Old and New Testaments examples of women leading and teaching.

Helvig: Absolutely! Throughout Scripture women led in powerful ways, even when there were men available to lead.

Does the Bible affirm women in leadership?

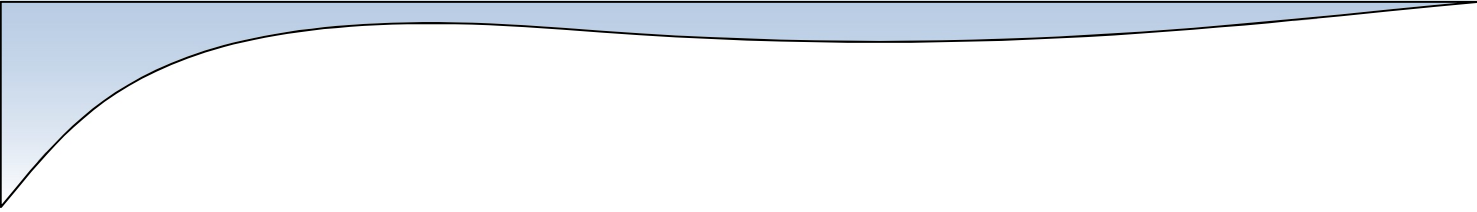
Payne In Romans 16, Paul praises for their leadership in church ministry, ten people by name and seven are women. But of the three men, two are listed with their wives. And contrary to Greek custom, one is listed, Priscilla, before her husband Aquila. So, she apparently took the leadership there.

It's not just that Paul affirms so many women, seven out of these ten. But, it's the way in which he affirms them, which is so remarkable in this culture. For instance, he begins by affirming Phoebe, deacon of the church of Cenchreae. By itself that's amazing because there is no other person named by name as being a local church leader in the entire New Testament. She is the only one! Phoebe delivered Paul's letter to the Romans to Rome. He entrusted to this woman his most important letter. And he told Rome, "Whatever she desires from you, give it to her. For, she has been a leader of many including myself also." When Paul was in her church, he put himself under her leadership.

And there's not a single credible church testimony in the entire first 1000 years of the church that regards Junia as anyone other than a woman. And, anyone other than an apostle. And, anyone other than outstanding among the apostles.

Haddad I'm often asked "Well, isn't it really true, Mimi, that women were leaders in the Scripture, especially in the Old Testament because men did not step up to the plate? Men were not responsive to God?" So, well, God's second best, here's woman. That's completely fallacious. It's not factual. The Bible speaks against that myth.

Huldah is a great example, because Huldah was a prophet during the time of Jeremiah and Zephaniah, two prominent prophets during the day. And yet and who does the king Josiah go to? He goes to Huldah. Josiah says "We found the word of the Lord. We found the word of the Lord. We found it. It's been recovered. What should we do Huldah?" She says "Obey it. It's the word of the Lord, obey it." And it led to one of the greatest revivals in Israel's history, one that lasted for decades.



There are so many examples of women in the Old Testament, especially as prophets, and Huldah is an important example. But remember prophets were the leaders of priests and kings, as the example of Huldah shows.

We have lots of examples of women prophets. Miriam, and Deborah, who was also a judge, and the mother of Israel, she was the most prominent leader of her day. And it wasn't because there weren't any men around. But because that was God's choice. It pleased God to make her prophet and judge.

Royer: So, we have heard that women in leadership are affirmed in Scripture. But what about Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians?

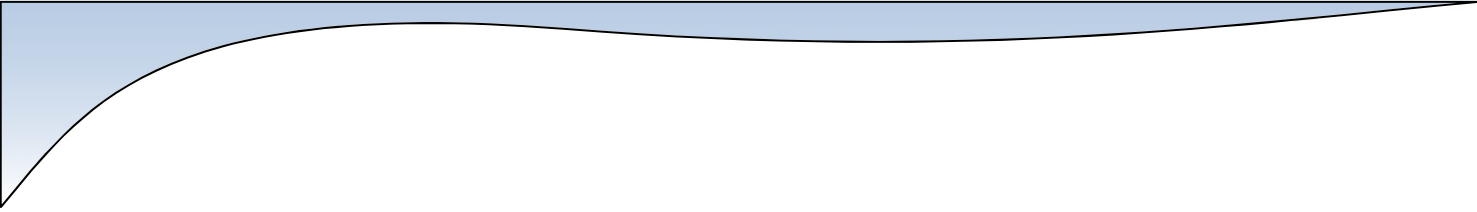
For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people. Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. 1 Corinthians 14:33-35

Helvig: Since this verse is key to our discussion, it is important to hear from one of the premier Bible scholars in the world today, N. T. Wright. We have a video clip of him speaking in Durham. We realize the quality of the film clip is not what you are used to seeing here, but N. T. Wright is definitely worth our attention.

Why does Paul instruct women in the church in Corinth to be silent?

Wright I've always been attracted, ever since I heard it, to the explanation offered again by Ken Bailey. Bailey says in the Middle East it was, of course in the early church, to be taken for granted, as in many parts of the world still today, that men and women sat on opposite sides in church.

The results would be that during the sermon, supposing we've done it tonight, and all the women are sitting here and all the men are sitting here and because that is the way we did it. I was preaching in the mainstream big language of the time. But all the women spoke various local dialects. So, the women would get bored. They wouldn't understand what was going on. They would start to talk among themselves. Bailey describes the scene as he has experienced it in such a church. The level of the talking would gradually increase until the minister would have to say, "Will the women please be quiet?" Where upon the talking would die down again, for a minute or two. At some point the minister would ask them again to be quiet. "If you want to know what's going on, you're going to ask your husbands when you get home." That makes a lot of sense socio-culturally. I'm not saying that is the right explanation. But from those situations, I am standing firmly on Ken Bailey's shoulders, I haven't experienced it myself. But, it does make a lot of sense.



After all, Paul's central concern in 1 Corinthians 14 is for order and decency in the church's worship. And this would fit extremely well. What the passage cannot possibly mean is that women must never speak during the service because 1 Corinthians 11, they're doing it. And Paul is giving regulations for how they should do it.

Mingo I think the reason why there is a hierarchal system in some, not a lot, some of the churches, is because a lot of times people don't know that Scriptures are taken out of context. So, when we look at the contextual hermeneutics of Scripture, we might have one Scripture where it says women are to be silent. But of course, not looking at the cultural aspect or the background of why that was even said, there we build a doctrine sometime on one or two Scriptures.

Royer: We have heard that the limitations placed on women are often based on verses taken out of context.

Helvig: And we know women prayed and prophesied in the church, so Paul is not saying that women should be silent all the time.

Royer: Now we need to address another passage, in 1 Timothy

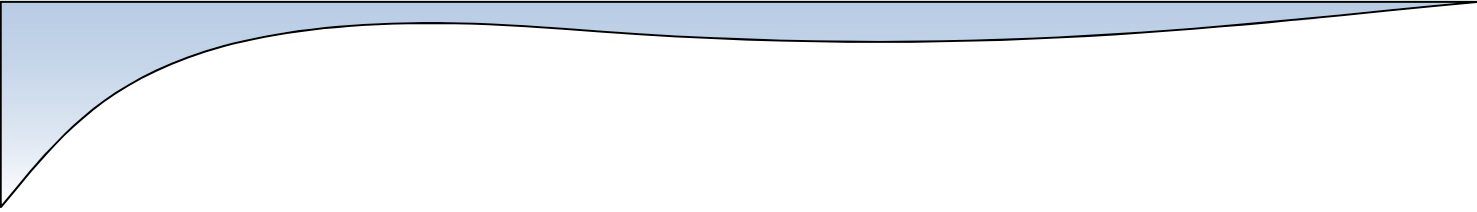
A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. 1 Timothy 2:11-12

Helvig: Let's listen to N. T. Wright and hear what he has to say about this passage.

Why does Paul tell the church in Ephesus that women are not to teach or assume authority over men?

Wright The key to the present passage is to recognize that it is commanding that women too should be allowed to study and learn. Remember Mary. And should not be restrained from doing so, verse 11. They are to be in full submission. This is often assumed to be to the men, to the husbands, but it is at least equally likely that it refers to their attitude as learners, of submission to God or the gospel. Which, of course, would be true for the men as well.

And then the crucial verse 12 may not be read as "I do not allow a woman to teach or hold authority over a man." That is the translation which has caused so much difficulty. It could equally mean, and in context this makes much more sense, "I do not mean to imply that I am now setting up women as the new authority over men in the same way that previously men held authority over women." And this replacing of one authority with another may be what that blessed word "authentein", which is a hapax in the middle of the Greek verse, may actually mean. Why might Paul need to stress this point? Well, there are some signs in the letter that it was originally sent to Timothy while he was in Ephesus. And that so even if the letter is fixedly by Paul. One of



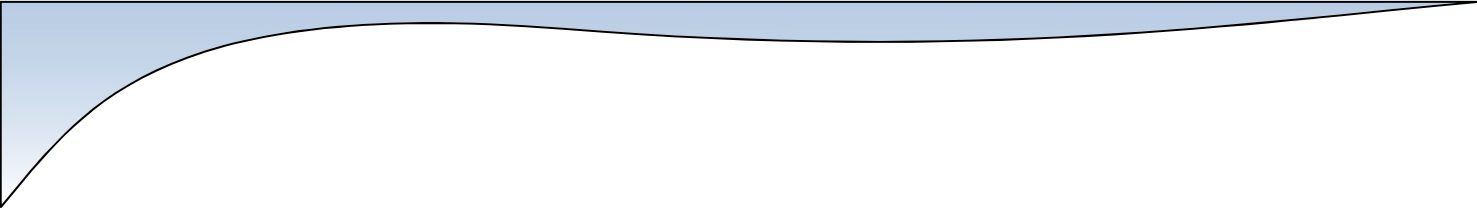
the main things we know about religion in Ephesus is that the main religion, the biggest temple, the most famous shrine was a female only cult, the temple of Artemis, who the Romans called Diana. Massive structure, some of you will have seen the area. It dominated the area and as befitted worshipers of a female deity, all the priests were all women. They ruled the show and kept the men on the side in their place.

Now, if you were writing a letter to someone in a small new religious movement with a base in Ephesus and you wanted to say that because of the gospel of Jesus, the old ways of organizing male and female rules had to be re-thought from top to bottom, with one feature being that now the women were to be encouraged to have the leisure to study and to do what Mary was doing and to learn the stuff so that they in turn could be teachers. You might want to avoid giving the wrong impression. Is the apostle saying, people might wonder, that women should be trained up so that Christianity would gradually become a cult like that of Artemis, with women taking the lead and men being squeezed out? It seems to me that is what verse 12 is denying. It's ruling out that misunderstanding of saying women must be allowed the leisure of study. The word I've translated, I'll read you my translation in a minute, tries to dictate there is unusual, but it seems to have the overtones, of being bossy or seizing control.

Paul is saying, like Jesus in Luke 10, women must have the space and leisure to study in their own way. Not in order that they may muscle in and take over the leadership as though this was a new version of the Artemis cult. But, so that men and women alike can develop all the gifts of learning, teaching and leadership that God has given them.

Groothuis Some Christians say "The Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it," when they are referring to a text that seems to restrict women in ministry or in marriage. And, at that point you want to say, "Well, the Bible says a lot of things that we don't apply literally today because the situation has changed." For example, Paul says straight out, greet one another with a holy kiss. Now that can get you in trouble today, in fact, so you have to say "What does that mean?" It means to be kind, it means to be welcoming to people. So, let's say when Paul says something about women not teaching in 1 Timothy 2, what does it mean? Then we realize there are many women who teach and lead in the Bible. So, we have to have a rational approach to the whole Bible. We don't simply pick a text out of context and make it a pretext for our prejudice.

Payne I heard a lecture and the lecturer stated that he believed there was no passage in the New Testament, properly understood in its original context, that limits the ministry of women. I almost stood up and said "That's not true!" I remembered a verse in 1 Timothy that said, I thought, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man." If that doesn't limit their ministry, what does? Well, I restrained myself and I went home that night and read 1 Timothy in Greek and I noticed things I'd never seen before. So, the next night I read it again in Greek and the next night and every night for several months. And I finally concluded "I cannot disprove him." I wanted to have the proof that he was wrong so the next time someone said that I could really hit them.



But I realized that virtually every sentence in the letter of 1 Timothy is related to one of those issues in the very first paragraph about false teaching. 1 Timothy is a letter that was written to a church struggling with false teaching. In that situation, the group, the only group that Paul identifies as being duped by the false teaching are women. And so, he doesn't want those women assuming authority to teach men in the church.

In chapter 1 of the same book, Paul said "I commanded you Timothy to silence the false teachers." Well, they were assuming authority that they didn't have to teach this false doctrine. And they were silenced. In that situation, Paul is restricting women from assuming authority for themselves to teach a man.

But, he is not saying that, if a woman has approval to teach, like Priscilla, who was a recognized approved teacher. She even taught Apollos. It's OK for her to teach because she wouldn't be assuming for herself authority. She had that recognized authority. And in fact, she had that recognized authority to teach Apollos in the church in Ephesus. This letter is to Ephesus. His next letter to Timothy is also to Ephesus and in it he says "My greetings to Prisca and Aquila, and the church in their house." So, she's there! She's still there, it's the same place. She's probably his best resource in bringing these women to their senses.

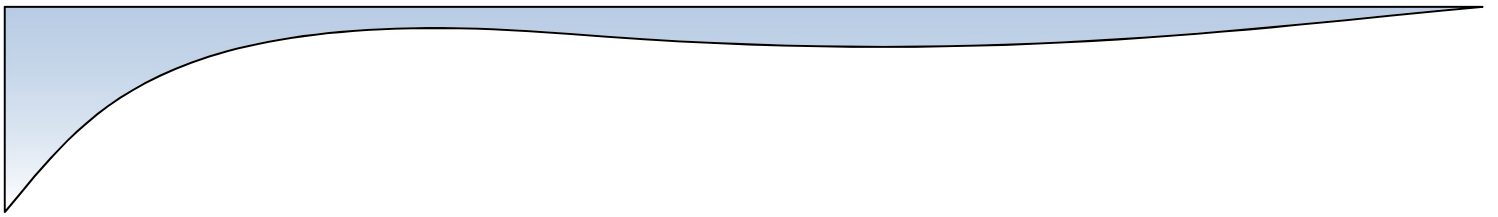
So, the bottom line is, this verse does not prohibit all women from being pastors. It's prohibiting women in that situation, who were deceived, from assuming authority to teach men.

Is there a stained-glass ceiling?

McKirland It was really in my undergraduate time when I moved away from my home church and that support network that I started experiencing some of that stained-glass ceiling that is so notorious in women's experience. And it was at that time where I really had to come to terms with the text. And when I first read through all those gender passages which up until that time I just wasn't confronted with that necessity. My first guess was, well, they look pretty literal that I can't do these things. And I remember my first path through those passages, feeling devastated, deflated. I felt like part of me died.

But the good thing is the Spirit would not let those gifts die. I had to have an outlet for teaching and preaching the gospel and helping other people understand the Scriptures. And so, it was actually at a very critical juncture, where I had been teaching at this church, working in the youth ministry for a few years. And there was a miscommunicated message that perhaps I wasn't supposed to be teaching because there were boys in the room. And I remember in that moment thinking "What is going on right now? I've been teaching. I feel like the Spirit has been moving and changing people's lives. The students are growing. I am growing. What's the matter?"

And I remember actually leaving that conversation. A mentor of mine had found out what had gone on at a staff meeting and he gave me a book called "Beyond Sex Roles" by Gilbert Bilizekian. And I went home and I read that for six hours and what it felt like was the weight of the world was lifted. Because I didn't know there was a third way. I thought it was either I abandon my faith and the Scriptures that had been my authority in



my life. Or, I abide by the Scriptures and I have to quench that part of my soul and my gifting and kind of die inside. But then to find this third way, it was one of the most liberating afternoons of my entire life outside of my salvation experience.

That's really the beginning of that story and it has continued to snowball since then. And finding needs. Cause everywhere is a need for women to know they're fully seen and loved by their Creator. And, that they have been gifted and they should utilize those gifts, no matter what. So that's still the on-going passion of my heart, and the thing that continues to keep me up at night is – how do the saints know of their dignity and how are they being equipped and empowered to walk fully in that?

Royer: These scholars have given us the meaning and context of the word “authority” in 1 Timothy 2.

Helvig: That specific Greek word for “authority” implied “seizing control” like the women in the Artemis cult. And the context was women spreading false teaching in Ephesus.

Royer: That means authentic authority and informed teaching is allowed, in the first century and now!

Helvig: This had a huge impact on how we encourage everyone to use the gifts they have been given.

Royer: And that is just what we will talk about in session 6.