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# **SERVICE—OR CIRCUS?**

**Scripture text: 1 Timothy 2**

Godly works (v. 10).

Paul did not suggest that good works are a substitute for clothing! **Rather, he was contrasting the “cheapness” of expensive clothes and jewelry with the true values of godly character and Christian service.**

**“Godliness”** is another key word in Paul’s pastoral letters (1 Tim. 2:2, 10; 3:16; 4:7–8; 6:3, 5–6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:1).

Glamour can be partially applied on the outside, but **godliness must come from within.**

**We must never underestimate the important place that godly women played in the ministry of the church.** The Gospel message had a tremendous impact on them because **it affirmed their value before God and their equality in the body of Christ** (Gal. 3:28). Women had a low place in the Roman world, but **the Gospel changed that.**

There were devoted women who ministered to Jesus in the days of His earthly ministry (Luke 8:1–3).

**Galatians 3:23-29** Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

**Luke 8:1-3** Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and **also some women** who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: **Mary, called Magdalene**, from whom seven demons had gone out, and **Joanna**, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and **Susanna**, and **many others, who provided for them out of their means.**

**They were present at His crucifixion and burial, and it was a woman who first heralded the glorious news of His resurrection.**

**Matthew 28:1-6** Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, **Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.** And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "**Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus** who was crucified. **He is not here, for he has risen,** as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

In the Book of Acts we meet **Dorcas** (Acts 9:36ff), **Lydia** (Acts 16:14ff), **Priscilla** (Acts 18:1–3), and **godly women in the Berean and Thessalonian churches** (Acts 17:4, 12).

Paul greeted at least eight women in Romans 16; and Phebe, who carried the Roman epistle to its destination, was a deaconess in a local church (Rom. 16:1). **Many believing women won their husbands to the Lord and then opened their homes for Christian ministry.**



## Quiet learning (v. 11).

“Silence” is an unfortunate translation because it gives the impression that believing women were never to open their mouths in the assembly. This is the same word that is translated “**peaceable**” in 1 Timothy 2:2.

**Some of the women abused their newfound freedom in Christ and created disturbances in the services by interrupting. It is this problem that Paul addressed in this admonition. **It appears that women were in danger of upsetting the church by trying to “enjoy” their freedom.****

Paul wrote a **similar admonition to the church in Corinth**, though this admonition may apply primarily to speaking in tongues.

**1 Corinthians 14:33-36** For **God is not a God of confusion but of peace**. As in all the churches of the saints, the **women should keep silent in the churches**. For they are not permitted to speak, but **should be in submission, as the Law also says**. If there is anything they desire to learn, **let them ask their husbands at home**. For it is shameful for a **woman to speak in church**. *Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?*

## **Respecting authority (vv. 12–15).**

Women are permitted to teach. Older women should teach the younger women (Titus 2:3–4). Timothy was taught at home by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). But **in their teaching ministry, they must not “lord it over” men**. There is nothing wrong with a godly woman instructing a man in private (Acts 18:24–28); but she **must not assume authority in the church and try to take the place of a man**. She should exercise “quietness” and **help keep order in the church**.

**Titus 2:3-5** Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. **They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children,** to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, **that the word of God may not be reviled.**

**Remember,** this was written in a culture where women were given, in an arranged marriage. To have a spouse chosen for you by your family with little or no say in the matter. This is why they need to learn to love their husbands and their children.

**2 Timothy 1:5-7** I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

**2 Timothy 3:14-15** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and **how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings,** which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

**Act 18:24-28** Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, **competent in the Scriptures**. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though **he knew only the baptism of John**. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, **they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately**. And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Paul gave several arguments to back up this **admonition that the Christian men in the church should be the spiritual leaders.**

**The first is an argument from Creation:** Adam was formed first, and then Eve (1 Tim. 2:12–13). (Paul used this same argument in 1 Cor. 11:1–10.)

**We must keep in mind that priority does not mean superiority.** Man and woman were both created by God and in God's image. **The issue is only authority: man was created first.**

**1 Timothy 2:12-14** I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For **Adam was formed first, then Eve;** and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

**1 Corinthians 11:3** But I want you to understand that the **head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband,** and the head of Christ is God.

**1 Corinthians 11:8-9** For man was not made from woman, **but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.**



**The second argument has to do with man's fall into sin.**

Satan deceived the woman into sinning (Gen. 3:1ff; 2 Cor. 11:3); the man sinned with his eyes wide open. Because **Adam rejected the God-given order, he listened to his wife, disobeyed God, and brought sin and death into the world. The submission of wives to their own husbands is a part of the original Creation.**

**The disorder we have in society today results from a violation of that God-given order.**

**Genesis 3:4-7** But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**" So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be **desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.** Then the eyes of both were opened, and **they knew that they were naked.** And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

**Genesis 3:17-19** And to Adam he said, "**Because you have listened to the voice of your wife** and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' **cursed is the ground because of you**; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. **By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**"

**2 Corinthians 11:3** But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

**I do not think Paul suggested that women are more gullible than men and thus more easily deceived; for experience proves that both men and women are deceived by Satan.**

On one occasion, Abraham listened to his wife and got into trouble (Gen. 16). Later on, she gave him counsel and God told him to obey it (Gen. 21). In my own pastoral ministry, I have benefited greatly from the encouragement and counsel of godly women; but **I have tried not to let them usurp authority in the church.** In fact, the godly women I have known have no desire to “run” things in the church.

**Genesis 16:2** And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And **Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.**

**Genesis 21:10-12** So she said to Abraham, "**Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.**" And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. **But God said to Abraham,** "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. **Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.**

The creation of humans and their fall both seem to put the woman in an inferior position, but she does have a ministry from God (1 Tim. 2:15).

There was probably a close relationship in Paul's mind between what he wrote here and what Moses wrote in Genesis 3:16—**the promise of the Savior** who would be "**made of a woman**" (Gal 4:4).

It was through a woman that the Savior came into the world. (**Keep in mind that Jesus had an earthly mother but not an earthly father**—Matt. 1:18ff; Luke 1:34–35.)

**Matthew 1:18-21** Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, **before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, **an angel of the Lord appeared to him** in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, **do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.** She will bear a son, and you **shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.**"

**Matthew 1:22-25** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "**Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel**" (which means, **God with us**). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but **knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.**

**Matthew 1:25** And knew her not **till she had brought forth her firstborn son**: and he called his name JESUS.  
(KJV)



**Luke 1:34-35** And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy--the Son of God.**

**Luke 1:45-48** And **blessed is she who believed** that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." And Mary said, "**My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.** For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

But Paul teaches a practical lesson (1 Tim. 2:15). He promised that the woman would “be kept safe through childbirth” (niv) if “they” (both husband and wife) **continued in sincere dedication to the Lord.**

Does this mean that Christian mothers will never die in childbirth? History and experience both tell us that they do. God has His purposes, and His ways are far above our thoughts (Isa. 55:8–9). Paul laid down a general principle that encouraged the believing women of that day. Their ministry was not to “run” the church, **but to care for the home and bear children to the glory of God** (1 Tim. 5:14).

**1 Timothy 5:13-16** Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. **So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander.** For some have already strayed after Satan. If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, **let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened,** so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

**Romans 16:1-6** I commend to you **our sister Phoebe**, a **servant of the church** at Cenchreae, that you may **welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints**, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. **Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life**, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. **Greet also the church in their house**. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. **Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.**

**Their home congregation would give them abundant opportunities for teaching the Word and ministering to the saints (see Rom. 16:1–6).**

Godly women do have an important ministry in the local assembly, even though they are not called to be teachers of the Word in a pastoral sense.

If all is done “decently and in order,” then God will bless.