



# Roles and Responsibilities of Women: Church Practices Series

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## **Roles and Responsibilities of Women**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this practice paper is to examine the roles and responsibilities of women. It is essential that women understand their God ordained position in the church, in their homes and in the world in which they live. There are few topics that are more relevant and important because our society's view of the role of women is very much opposed to what God says a woman's role should be. The God given roles of men and women have been blurred beyond recognition. The break down of these distinctions between men and women has caused great damage to the family and the church of God.

The goal of this paper is to encourage women to see their God-ordained roles and fulfill them out of love for God knowing that this is for their good and God's glory. Women need to see the beauty of their role in God's design. They need to see that aligning their lives according to these roles brings peace, joy and contentment. To abandon these roles and follow the worldly ways of our modern culture will only bring strife, sadness, and discontent.

This paper addresses all women, though much of it relates to family life. Single women have the same role as married women in the church and in the world. During their time of singleness they should acquire as many of the skills that they will need if God grants them a husband and children. This is a time where they have much greater freedom to ministry and learn. When women are married demands on their time by their family is great and there is much less time to grow and learn the arts of a godly woman.

This paper will address three areas in which God has outlined the roles and responsibilities of women:

- The Economy of the Home
- The Economy of the Church
- The Economy of the World

We have done a greatly expanded study related to the roles of women, specifically addressing the topics of being a teacher and exercising authority. It is part of our Special Studies papers. This work is much more extensive and technical and goes into much detail that is summarized in this work. This second work was done to provide a clearly studied position on several subject areas that are of controversy in our society. If you desire a deeper understanding of this topic please see one of the Elders to obtain a copy of this more extensive work.

## The Economy of the Home

- **Proverbs 31:10 An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.**

### *Personal Responsibilities*

Because of the important demands related to all of her other responsibilities, it can be difficult for a wife and mother to find an uninterrupted time of fellowship with God. Yet, because her walk with God will be reflected in everything done in the home there is a need to commune with Christ daily if she hopes to encourage her family to look to Christ.

- Example - Susanna Wesley (She would take her Bible and pull her dress over her head in the kitchen for her quiet time and the kids knew that they could not interrupt her during that time.)

### *Responsibilities of a Wife*

God has given us a marvelous blue print for marriage. He has clearly laid out what the responsibilities of husband and wife are. As we fulfill these God ordained roles in marriage, we will have the kind of marriages that God intended them to be. When we step out of these roles, we will only have contention and conflict. A woman must understand her God given role and delight to fulfill it for her and her families good and for God's glory. Again, as we saw in worship, God desires obedience from the heart. The primary motive for fulfilling your role must be love for the Savior. It is also essential that you keep in mind that the husband-wife relationship is your highest priority in any human relationship.

### **Help Mate**

- **Genesis 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."**

God has made the woman to be a helper to her husband. Wayne Mack has some helpful insight into what a helper is:

- Makes the home a safe place.
  - A place of refuge and comfort.
  - Not to constantly remind him of his faults and mistakes.
  - Correct him only when necessary.
- Be trustworthy and dependable (Proverbs 31:11-12).
- Maintain a good attitude (James 3:13-18).
- Be satisfied with your position, possessions, and tasks (Philippians 4:6-13).
- Be longsuffering, forgiving, and forbearing (Colossians 3:12-14).

- Show an interest in his problems and concerns (Philippians 2:3-4).
- Offer suggestions, advice and corrections in a loving fashion (Proverbs 31:26).
- Keep yourself beautiful, especially in the inner person (1 Peter 3:1, 2, 7).
- Cooperate in raising children (Ephesians 6:20).
- Build loyalty to your husband in the children.
  - Your confidence will be picked up by the children.
- Show confidence in his decisions.

You are your husband's helper. You are his completer in the partnership of marriage.

### **Respect Your Husband**

- **Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.** The word for "respect" is often used in the New Testament to refer to how a person should have a reverential fear or respect for God. It literally means "to have a profound measure of respect for."

### **Submission**

This word means: "to subject oneself; submit to; obey; be under the authority of; take a subordinate place" The word is used by Paul in Eph 5:24 "**But as the church is subject to Christ so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.**"

This subordinate role is mocked in our society as an out of date idea designed to keep women from experiencing joy and freedom. Yet, this is God's standard and when embraced out of love for Him will bring true joy and freedom.

Let's examine the concept of submission in greater detail.

#### **What Submission is not:**

- The wife becomes a slave.
- The wife never opens her mouth, has an opinion, or gives advice.
- She is a wallflower that folds up and her abilities lie dormant.
- She is inferior to her husband.

#### **What submission is:**

- It is the wife's responsibility to make herself submissive (not the husband's).
- It is to be continuous (Ephesians 5:22 - present tense).
- It is mandatory (Imperative) - not based on how her husband acts.
- It is a spiritual matter "As unto the Lord" – Ultimately submission to your husband is an expression of your love for and submission to Jesus Christ.

- It is a positive concept.
  - You are your husband's teammate striving for the same goal.
  - You have opinions, desires, requests, and insights that you lovingly make known.
- It involves attitudes as well as actions.
  - We delight to do the will of God.
- It is to be extensive.
  - As the church is to Christ.
  - Unless against the Word of God.
- A wife is to meet her husband's sexual needs, and he hers (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).
- A wife also must be careful to avoid arguing and nagging. What she says will either build up or tear down her home.
  - **Proverbs 21:9 It is better to live in a corner of a roof, Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.**
  - **Proverbs 14:1 The wise woman builds her house but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.**
  - **Proverbs 31:26 She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.**

## Home

**Titus 2:3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.**

The women are to be workers at home. They are not only to be home, but also to be productive at home. They are to work hard at cleaning, cooking, child rearing, and so forth.

*"Of course this is hard work, especially when the little ones are young. Many wives, when they go through this experience, are tempted to treat "being tired" as though it were a symptom of having done something wrong. Rather, it is a symptom of having done many things right." - Doug Wilson*

It is clear from the Scriptures that a woman's priority is to be her home. As a side note, this brings up the question, "Can a woman work outside the home?"

Answer:

- Command - There is no direct command that would make it unlawful for a woman to work outside of her home.
- Principle - A woman is given several priorities in the Scriptures. Her first and foremost calling is to have communion with God. Then she is called to be a faithful wife. Next, to be a faithful mother. She is also called to have an orderly home. When she is older she will by God's grace be a godly example to the younger women and be able to encourage them in their God given tasks. Scripture then does not specifically prohibit work outside the home but does clearly give the home as a woman's primary place of work. Certainly, if a woman's work outside the home causes neglect of the home, it would become sin. There are obviously exceptions to this such as the husband being incapacitated or the woman being a single mother due to death or desertion.

### ***Responsibilities of a Mother***

Women have a special role in the training of their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. You are with your children more than your husband and are responsible for much of their daily care. They will see you live out your love for Christ moment by moment in the circumstances of life. Embrace with joy the special calling that you have as a mother. Be faithful in this high, holy calling and one-day those “children will rise up and call you blessed.” One day, by God's grace, those children will take the torch and continue to advance God's kingdom after you are gone. They will train up your grandchildren and will begin a lineage of faithfulness. Do not lose sight of the joy that will be yours in seeing your children walk in truth! A faithful mother does not guarantee faithful children, but this is your task, to point them to a faithful God.

- **1 Thessalonians 2:7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.**
- **Titus 2:4 that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,**

### **The Economy of the Church**

In this section we will examine some key passages that address the issue of a woman's role in the church.

#### ***1 Timothy 2:9-15***

**9 Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments,  
10 but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to**

**godliness.**

**11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.**

**12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.**

**13 For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve.**

**14 And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.**

**15 But *women* will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.**

Passage Context:

- In the immediate context Paul is giving instruction to men and women concerning proper behavior when the church gathers for corporate worship, teaching, and edification. The setting of a corporate gathering seems to be confirmed by the statement in 2:8 that in "every place" men are to lead in prayer. This (as one commentator remarks) most likely refers "to the various meeting places of the church in, perhaps, house churches or other groups".
- We also have Paul's remarks in 3:14-15 concerning the purpose of his instruction. "**I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.**"
- Tying conduct to the fact that the church is the pillar and support of the truth is significant because in a broader context one of Paul's main concerns in 1 Timothy is that sound doctrine be preserved and proclaimed in a proper manner. This concern is indeed relevant to the instruction given to women and their involvement in the teaching ministry of the church.

### **Instruction to Women (1 Timothy 2:9-15)**

#### **Dress (2:9-10)**

In these two verses Paul is focusing on internal rather than external beauty. He states that a woman making a claim to godliness should be clothed in good works. Her beauty is not based upon outward appearance but rather is her godly character and love for her Savior. This is similar to what Peter says in 1 Peter 3:3-4:

**3 Your adornment must not be *merely* external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;**

**4 but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.**

Paul says that he wants women **"to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly,..."**

- "modestly" - being careful not to overstep the bounds of propriety, guarding against that which is immodest.
- "discreetly" - using good sense, sound judgment, and self control in clothing.

Paul is saying that your dress should manifest your godly character. Does the way you dress imply you are seeking to draw attention to yourself? The purpose of Sunday worship is not to make a fashion statement, but to worship the living God and point others to His beauty and glory. Come to the gathered assembly clothed in Christ's beauty and the good deeds that flow out of your love for Him.

- **Proverbs 31:30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.**

### **Being a Quiet, Submissive Learner (2:11-12)**

Paul now gives very specific direction concerning a woman's role when the church is gathered for worship and edification (specifically with respect to instruction from the Word). She is to learn in silence with an attitude of entire submissiveness. Paul states in 2:11 **"A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness."**

- Atmosphere - "quietly" – This word can mean either **"1. state of quietness without disturbance, *quietness, rest* or 2. state of saying nothing or very little, *silence*"** In our verse the emphasis is probably the idea of being silent while learning. However, this silence should flow out of a gentle and quiet spirit (definition 1 above).
- Attitude - "with entire submissiveness" – The word submissiveness means, **"the state of submissiveness, *subjection, subordination*, as opposed to setting oneself up as controller; *subordinating herself in every respect 1 Ti 2:11.*"** The word is used to describe the relationship between slaves and masters (Titus 2:9), the submission of church members to their appointed leaders (Heb 13:17), and the verb form of the word is also used by Paul to describe the relationship of a wife to her husband and the church to Christ (Eph 5). In our verse (in the context of members of the body gathered for worship or instruction) Paul is commanding that a woman learn from the appointed leaders/teachers of the church "with entire submissiveness". For a godly woman this is a heart issue and involves joyful submission to God's Word and the men appointed by Him to teach it.

In contrast to the positive statements of 2:11, Paul in 2:12 states what a woman is not to do. He says, **"But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet."** A literal rendering of the original Greek would be; **"To teach, a**

**woman I do not allow nor to exercise authority over a man, but to be in silence."**

The sentence contains two separate but related prohibitions with the first prohibition of not teaching being placed by Paul in the emphatic position in the sentence. The word translated "or" in English would better be translated as the coordinating conjunction "nor". Hence the sentence would read, "I do not allow a woman to teach nor do I allow a woman to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." Therefore, when 2:11 and 2:12 are contrasted, Paul says a woman is to receive instruction from the appointed leaders/teachers of the church and not teach the church. She is to have an attitude of quiet submission as she learns from God's appointed men as opposed to having a desire for or occupying a position of authority in the church such as that of leader/teacher.

Some commentators restrict the implied object of the infinitive "to teach" to be only men. In other words, a woman would only be restricted from teaching men. However, when the early church gathered for instruction (as in described in this letter), all would be present including men, women, and children. All would be instructed by the one teaching. Therefore, it seems better to view the object of "to teach" as the gathered church including men, women, and children rather than just men. The point here is that she is forbidden from teaching, not just forbidden from teaching men. This is also supported by the reason why Paul prohibits a woman from this ministry that is discussed below.

However, since men would be present in the congregation and given the authoritative nature of the teaching ministry, Paul also addresses the separate but related concern, which is the exercise of authority by women over men.

The word "exercise authority over" is defined by various lexicons to mean: "**to assume a stance of independent authority, give orders to, dictate to;** strictly, of one who acts on his own authority; hence *to have authority over, have control over, or domineer.*" The lexicons indicate that the word can have a negative connotation of dominating or it can simply mean to exercise authority. In our context, it is set in contrast to the idea of learning in a quiet and submissive manner. Considering the range of meaning and given our context we believe that it simply means a woman is not to have a position of authority over a man or exercise legitimate authority reserved for men. This would certainly include the idea of being a teacher of the church, but would also include any other position of authority that is reserved for men in the church. Paul prohibits this and reiterates that she is to remain quiet.

We believe God, through the apostle Paul, prohibits women from engaging in a very specific ministry in I Timothy 2:12; that of the authoritative teaching of sound doctrine to the church. The specific nature of this prohibition would not prohibit a woman from using the Scriptures as she engages in the "one anothering" aspects of body life. Reading the Scriptures, correcting someone in error, giving an explanation as part of a general conversation and the like, is not what is being prohibited. All believers are to do such things. Evangelism of the lost is also open to all without restraint. Paul prohibits women specifically from being teachers in the church. Being a teacher involves much more than

general interaction with other believers, even if the topic does reference theological issues.

The word translated "doctrine" in 4:6 literally means "teaching" and refers to the content of what is taught. Paul modifies this term in 1:10 with the word "sound" meaning "**to be sound or free from error, *be correct***," This "sound" doctrine is what Paul wants Timothy to teach to the body while at the same time he is to "**command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer.**" (1:3 NIV) Without the teaching of sound doctrine the church can be led astray into error and deception.

Although the word for teach can mean simply the idea of communicating information, Paul uses it and its related terms in I Timothy to mean the communication of sound doctrine. This can readily be seen by observing some of the verses where it occurs. A listing of which follows:

- 1 Timothy 1:3 As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to **teach strange doctrines**,
- 1 Timothy 2:7 And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as **a teacher** of the Gentiles in faith and truth.
- 1 Timothy 2:12 But I do not allow a woman **to teach** or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.
- 1 Timothy 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, **able to teach**,
- 1 Timothy 4:6 In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the **sound doctrine** which you have been following.
- 1 Timothy 4:11 Prescribe and **teach** these things. 12 Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.
- 1 Timothy 4:13 Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and **teaching**.
- 1 Timothy 4:16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your **teaching**; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

These verses reveal Paul's concern for the preservation and proclamation of sound doctrine. This doctrine was to be taught with authority as evidenced in 1Tim 4:11 above.

The word for "Prescribe" means; **"to make an announcement about something that must be done, give orders, command, instruct, direct;** used of all kinds of persons in authority, worldly rulers, Jesus, the apostles." It is important to note that authoritative teaching does not imply that the authority inherently resides in the teacher. Paul stated in Galatians 1:8 **"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!"** No one, not even Paul, has the authority to alter God's truth. However, because the Word of God is authoritative it is to be declared in an authoritative manner by those called to preach and teach it.

Timothy was to teach sound doctrine with authority because, as we can see from 4:16, the salvation of souls was a stake. Thus, we conclude that this teaching ministry (i.e. the authoritative teaching of sound doctrine) is what Paul prohibits to women. Whenever and wherever members of the body gather for the purpose of being instructed from the word, this is a ministry reserved for those men that God has called and gifted to perform it. Men such as Timothy and others like the Elders who as part of their qualification must be able to teach (literally "skillful in teaching"). The authoritative nature of this teaching is also implied by Paul's statement that a woman **"must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness."** To demand submissiveness means that the teaching is God's authoritative truth being delivered in an authoritative manner by God's appointed teacher.

### **The Reasons for Paul's Statements (2:13-14)**

Verses 13 and 14 give the reasons for Paul's statements in verses 11 and 12. In verse 13 Paul gives the reason why a woman should display a quiet submissive attitude while learning from the teachers/leaders of the church as opposed to exercising the authority reserved for men. Paul states, **"For it was Adam who was first created and then Eve."** Paul appeals to the order of creation in which the woman was created to be a helper suitable for the man. She was created to help and follow in the partnership of marriage not to lead. The man was given the authority as leader in the marriage relationship and men are given authority in the leadership of the church. This appeal to the created order before the fall lends strong support to the fact that Paul's instruction transcends culture. In other words what he has stated concerning the woman's role is applicable in any culture, including ours.

In verse 14 we have the specific reason why women are prohibited from involvement in the authoritative teaching of sound doctrine to the church. Paul states, **"And it was not Adam who was deceived but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression."** Paul contrasts the man and woman in this statement. His focus is the issue of deception with respect to the command of God in the garden. The woman was deceived by the serpent as he interacted with her concerning God's word. Adam was not deceived. He sinned knowing that what he was doing was wrong as he followed his wife. Therefore, a woman is not only prevented from teaching because it is the exercise of authority in the church, but also because of her deception in the garden. She is not suited for this role even as men are not suited to fulfill the roles God has given to women. She is

not inferior to the man, but has been created to fulfill her role in partnership with the man. It is this God given role that Paul addresses in verse 15.

### **The Primary Role for Women (2:15)**

Paul now focuses our attention on the primary sphere in which a woman will have her greatest ministry and influence: the home.

- **1 Timothy 2:15 But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.**

**"But"** - Eve fell into transgression, but in contrast to that, God has made a way of preservation. The word translated "preserved" is the Greek word for "save". Many do not believe this verse is talking about eternal salvation, but every time Paul uses this word in the Pastoral Epistles it refers to salvation from God's wrath. We believe that this verse is dealing with where a woman works out her salvation. This verse is speaking about the main sphere in which a woman's progressive sanctification occurs. The home is her primary place of ministry and influence as she lives for Christ in partnership with her husband and fulfills her God given roles as wife and mother.

**"the bearing of children"** - Paul is not teaching that a woman is justified through the bearing of children. That would be salvation by a human work and all women who could not have children would be excluded. Possibly Paul focused on childbirth because this is a privilege given to women that highlights her wonderful uniqueness in God's plan. In the home under the authority of her husband and in partnership with him she finds her highest calling. In this sphere she is called to teach her children the truths of God and live out her love for God before them as a shining example of the grace of God. Her genuine relationship with the living God will be seen as she continues **"in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint."** By the grace of God she will impact the next generation for Christ and have the joy of seeing her children and even her grandchildren walk in truth.

### **Conclusions from this passage**

When we look at what Paul is actually telling Timothy and the women of the church, in this section we see some very simple guidance. It can be summarized as follows:

- A godly woman's character will be reflected in her good works and modest dress.
- Women are to be taught the Word by God's appointed leaders/teachers of the church and are to learn in a quiet, submissive manner.
- Women are not permitted to exercise a position of authority in the congregation (such as an elder or teacher) because of the creation order. Adam was created first and then Eve.

- Specifically with regard to teaching the congregation (including men, women, and children), women are not to teach because of the woman's deception in the garden.
- Women are to fulfill their proper place in the home and live godly, faithful lives.

### **Titus 2:3-5**

**3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,  
4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,  
5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.**

Passage context:

- Titus is instructed by Paul in 2:1 to "**speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.**" Paul then describes what should characterize the lives of the saints as he begins with the older men in 2:2, moves on to the older and younger women in 2:3-5, and addresses the younger men in 2:6.

### **Instructions to Older and Younger Women (Titus 2:3-5)**

#### **Older Women (2:3-4a)**

In these two verses Paul, as he did with the older men, focuses on character/behavior issues. An older woman is primarily by her behavior to set a godly example for the younger women in order that she might come alongside and encourage them to focus on their family as their highest earthly priority.

Paul says that older women are to be "**reverent in their behavior**". The word for reverent means "strictly *befitting* or *suitable to what is sacred*; hence, of persons who honor God in their conduct *fitting for religious persons, reverent in behavior* (TI 2.3)". He then qualifies this with two negative statements that would be the opposite of reverent behavior; "**not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine,**" The word for "malicious gossips" is used in 2 Tim3:3 as a term that describes unregenerate men in the "last days" and is also used as another name for Satan translated "Devil" in English. The word means to engage in slanderous speech. The second negative, which is opposite to reverent behavior, is to be "enslaved to much wine". An older woman must not find her satisfaction in the passing pleasures of sin that enslave the unregenerate.

Such behavior and other like characteristics would then allow her to be described as "**teaching what is good**". This adjective would be a fitting description of such an older, godly woman and means "a teacher of virtue, goodness, or right behavior". Primarily, in

other words, she is "teaching by her example". She is setting a godly example for the younger women so that she might "**encourage**" the younger women (the purpose for these qualities). The word means "**to admonish, to exhort earnestly, to instruct in prudence or behavior that is becoming and shows good judgment, to encourage, advise, urge**". The older women in the church who are living reverently and setting a godly example are to come alongside the younger women and earnestly encourage and exhort them to do what God has called them to do. This encouragement and exhortation certainly may involve the use of appropriate Scripture and would not be in conflict with the prohibition of 1 Timothy 2:12. Note that the older, godly women, not all women, are called to this task. The examples of the lives of these older women who have lived unto the Lord over time and have walked in God's ways are crucial to younger women learning how to walk according to God's Word. This task is given specially to the godly, older women of the church, not any teacher, the Elders, or other young women.

### **Younger Women (4b-5)**

Paul now gives us what God has called the younger women to do and what the older women are to be encouraging in their behavior.

The younger women are to be exhorted to "**love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.**"

As we saw in 1 Timothy and now in Titus, Paul makes it clear that the primary place of ministry and influence for women is in the home in partnership with her husband, submitting to his authority and fulfilling her God given role. The purpose of her fulfilling her God given role is "**so that the word of God will not be dishonored.**" The word for dishonored would be literally translated as "blasphemed". When we abandon what God has given us to do it dishonors Him and His Word. When we do what He has called us to do out of love for Him and faith in Him, He is honored. This is why godly, older women are to encourage and instruct in these areas, and the younger ones are to learn. The honor of God's Word is at stake.

### **The Arts of a godly Woman**

The following section is given to provide a better understanding of the qualities and tasks that younger women are to develop with the aid of the godly, older ones.

This section is entitled "arts" since there is no "Ten Steps to godliness" that will put the stamp of godliness on a woman. There are qualities, behaviors, and tasks, but each woman will find her own manifestation in her own time, culture, marriage, and home. The godly, older women are critical to helping the younger women to find their way in this life long process. Paul lays out these things in the following passages.

- *4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5a to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands,*
- Paul lays out a set of objectives that encompass a set of qualities and behaviors that younger women are to achieve and duties that they are to perform.
- **The qualities and behaviors are:**
  - *To love their husbands.* This is an odd statement in light of the fact that today we marry for “love”. For those of Paul’s day this was not usually that case. Most marriages were arranged. The bride and groom often never saw each other until the marriage day. It is also telling in that “to love” a husband must be taught, thus it is not something that is drawn from him, but done by her. The word used is based on the word for brotherly or familial love. It is relationship oriented, both with feeling and action. To marry for love does not necessarily equate to “loving” your husband. Love doesn’t just happen and though emotion and feeling is bound in the word Paul uses it is not based on emotion, but relationship. This word is an adjective that describes what the younger woman is to be. A lover of her husband. Older women can have much to say on what this means in practice and how to do it in a godly manner.
  - *To love their children.* This is an equally odd statement. Doesn’t every mother “love” her children? Paul uses a similar word as for loving her husband. Again, to have love for children is not just an emotion, but also acting in a Biblical manner. It is an act that must be performed by the mother in order that she “love” her children. The Scriptures are full of information on what it means to love a child. It must, however, be put into practice on a daily basis. A young woman can learn much from a more mature one, if she is willing. Loving children is learned. It just doesn’t happen by hoping it will.
  - *To be sober.* The Greek uses the root word for that of the older women to teach the younger to be sober. This word describes a woman that is sound of mind, able to curb her emotions and desires, who is self-controlled. Maturity is not something that comes from being impulsive or unstable. It is a long road before most of us and it takes diligence to live a godly life and have a godly marriage and family. When we see someone who is sober we begin to understand what this means. When we are young we think we are sober minded, but this is rarely the case. The older, godly women are the models of what this sound mind, emotional stability and self-control looks like.
  - *To be pure.* This word means to excite reverence, to be clean, pure, modest, or chaste. This is not the picture of glamour and power that the world paints as what a woman is to be. This is a holy, unstained woman that is not polluted by the thoughts, practices, and behaviors of the world. She is different. This is not the picture of the nun in the monastery. This is a woman that lives in the world, yet is not stained by it.

- *To be kind.* The word used here is describing one that is good, proper, “to meeting a high standard or worth or merit” (BDAG) or fitting for one’s task. It is one that is good and kind, or excellent. The younger women are to be observably good and fitting to their task. If things are not handled properly in the realm of the home this characteristic is not present. This idea is very similar to the idea of the Proverbs 31 woman.
- **The Tasks are:**
  - *To be a worker at home.* This is a phrase that often causes controversy, especially in today’s environment. The Greek word is used only once in the New Testament. Its meaning is that she is one that keeps the home in order, is taking care of household affairs, or works at the affairs of the home. This would include all realms of the home, the children, homemaking, etc. Since this is the only time this word is used it is useful to see if similar instruction is given in the New Testament that might help clarify what Paul was intending. In the passage below Paul is instructing young widows as to what they should be doing. In it Paul tells them to marry, have children, keep house, and live so that no one could bring a charge against them. The word that Paul uses for “keep house” is “oikodespoteo”, which means to guide the house, to master the home, to rule the household or family affairs. It literally means to be a house ruler. It would be hard to see that Paul’s instruction was for women to go outside the home and work, especially in light of the fact that he was speaking to widows, most likely with children. He did not tell them to go find a job and to support yourselves. He said go home and to rule over the affairs of your home. Women have been given the task of being the stewards of the home. This is a truly great and difficult calling. The mature women are needed to help guide the younger ones through this most challenging and rewarding task.
    - NAB 1 Timothy 5:14 Therefore, I want younger *widows* to get married, bear children, keep house, *and* give the enemy no occasion for reproach;
  - *To be subject to her own husband.* This phrase uses wording to make it clear that she is to be under the authority of her own husband. She is under his protection and authority, not any other man no matter who he is. This word is not the one used of children to obey their parents. This is a placing under the authority, not a slavish obedience. She is to place herself in this state. It is not the man’s task to “make her submit”. A marriage is a partnership where the wife is the helpmate to her husband. She completes him and he her. This task of staying under his authority in practice is one of the most difficult tasks of a younger woman. God stated the cursed that the fall brought on Eve in that her nature would be to try and control her husband, yet he would rule over her. This is what set up an internal tension between a husband and wife. In Christ a woman can have

victory over this fallen nature, even though the desire is still present. This task is one that is an every minute battle with the internal nature of a woman. Looking back at Paul's first instruction in verse 6 to younger men (your husbands) is to be sensible. The husband needs to learn good sense, but the wife is responsible for herself even in spite of him. The encouragement from an older woman will prove invaluable in meeting this task successfully.

### ***Conclusions from this passage***

When we look at what Paul is actually telling Titus and the women of the church in this section we see some clear guidance. It can be summarized as follows:

- Older women are to live godly, exemplary lives that enable them in word and deed to come alongside the younger women and exhort/encourage them to be godly wives and mothers.
- This is a task given specifically to the *godly, older* women. These women have the experience and example that can only come through years of living by faith and lovingly doing what they are now to encourage the younger women to do.
- This task is not in conflict with the teaching ministry prohibited to women in 1 Timothy 2:12. This is teaching by example with the accompanying verbal encouragement and instruction necessary to promote godliness. This is not "I will teach you *what* God's Word says" (In the sense of the authoritative teaching of sound doctrine discussed above). It is rather, "I will show/encourage you *how to live out* what God's Word says". There is a clear assumption that women have been taught and know what God's Word says (1 Timothy 2:11). Using Scripture to encourage or give an instructive exhortation is appropriate in this context.

### **Single Women**

Single women, you have the privilege of loving and serving your Savior with undistracted devotion. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 7: 32-35

**32 But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;**

**33 but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,**

**34 and *his interests* are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.**

**35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and *to secure* undistracted devotion to the Lord.**

Enjoy the singleness that God has given you. It may only be for a time. Seek Him with all your heart. Learn all you can about Him and fall more in love with Him. He must always be your first love even if God gives a husband and children.

Single women can learn about and practice many of the items that are discussed for those that are married. They also have more time and flexibility to gain these skills while single than when they are married. A single woman has a great opportunity both to serve and to learn about being a godly woman during her time as a single. This godliness will be seen in her life and her service.

Godly men seek godly women, thus the time of singleness is a time, for many, to be preparing to be married, not one to squander on self. Being around older, married women gives a great opportunity to learn and can also present a great many opportunities to serve. Even without being married, a single woman can learn how to love a husband and children. To forsake this opportunity will bring regret regarding the time wasted and opportunities missed if/when you are married and raising children.

### ***The Many Avenues of Ministry Available to Women***

Women, as part of the body of Christ, are called to do what every saint is called to do, especially evangelism. They are to exercise their gifts for the common good and edification of the body. They are to be involved in all the "one another" aspects of Christian life, including encouraging and admonishing. There are limitless ways to express love for the saints and serve those in need. Paul mentioned the activities of godly older widows in 5:10 **"having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work."**

Women, consider how to stir the saints up unto love and good works. The needs are great and your prayers, encouragement, and service are indispensable.

### **The Economy of the World**

This is the same as the section in the church practice paper concerning men's roles and responsibilities.

### **Application within the Church – Questions and Answers**

In this section we will address natural questions that stem from the application of what we have learned in this study. Naturally, not all possible questions can be answered, nor

can every possible scenario be address. We will provide a framework that will help answer other potential questions.

1. *Can women teach the Scriptures in the church on any level, such as teaching children in Sunday School?*

Paul does not specifically address the issue of a context such as Sunday School. However, based upon the prohibition of 2 Timothy 2:12; we would understand that the authoritative teaching of sound doctrine on any level in the church should be performed by the men God has called and gifted to do so. This would include any Sunday School class (regardless of age) where the teaching of sound doctrine occurs. The issue is solely with teaching as described in this paper, not with age.

*Supplemental Comments:* Scripture does not give us any boundaries regarding an age where this kind of teaching begins. In the home, such teaching begins as soon as possible with both the father and mother constantly bringing the child's attention to the truths taught about God in the Scripture. (Deut. 6:4-9)

In terms of the realm of the church, evangelism is always appropriate at any age. However, Paul's prohibition concerning women teaching would apply in any class where the teaching of sound doctrine occurs. This may vary from class to class and from year to year. This issue is not one of age, per se, but rather whether "teaching" occurs. We can look to our own society and those of the past to gain insight into the age at which children can begin to grasp the content of this kind of teaching and thus use this as a starting point to place boundaries.

The teaching of sound doctrine from the Scriptures to little minds would begin at an age where children can think, reason and understand the truths being taught. This age may vary for individual children but our society recognizes the age of between 5 and 6 as the point where formal education begins.

When we examine the cultural understanding of teaching children from the Jewish perspective (Paul's time) we find that at around age 3 they were taught to memorize verses, benedictions, wise sayings, etc. At 5 years of age the Hebrew Bible was used to teach the Scriptures associated with the observance of the ordinances of the Law from Leviticus. At age 6 they were sent to school. (Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, pp. 129 ff) This would be very consistent with the age formal education begins in our society.

It seems reasonable to assume then that any Sunday School class having children at this age (5 to 6) would require a male teacher who would be able (on their level) to teach them the Scriptures and sound doctrine. This *is not an absolute rule but simply a guideline* based upon typical children. The Elders will determine if a class is being or should be taught in the formal sense. Again, *age is not the primary issue* to determine when a gifted man should be teaching but

rather the kind of activity performed in the class. The *authoritative teaching of sound doctrine* as a ministry of the church *at any level requires a man* called and gifted to do so.

2. *Does the limitation of women teaching in the church preclude them from being involved in Sunday School classes in some other capacity?*

No. The only restriction is on teaching the Scriptures. Helping children memorize Scripture, doing crafts that depict Scripture, playing games that either help learn or test Scripture knowledge, singing songs that are related to Scripture etc. are all completely allowable activities for women.

3. *Can women teach their children at home?*

Yes, the Scriptures place no limitation on mothers teaching their children (regardless of age). This is part of their God given role in the home. Fathers are to be the primary teachers in the home but under her husband's authority and in partnership with him she is to impart truth to her children. Mothers play a vital role in bringing up godly children.

*Supplemental Comments:* There are many places in the Scriptures that support the above answer. In Deuteronomy 6:4-8, Moses in speaking to the people of Israel states:

**<sup>4</sup> "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! <sup>5</sup> "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup> "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. <sup>9</sup> "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.**

Both parents were to be involved in saturating the lives of their children with the Scripture.

Solomon tells his sons in Proverbs 6:20; **"My son, observe the commandment of your father And do not forsake the teaching of your mother;"** A wise son was to listen to the teaching of his mother.

And finally, we read in 2 Timothy (1:5 and 3:15) that Timothy was taught the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother in the home as a child.

4. *Can women teach other children in their home along with their own?*

A woman's primary responsibility (as mentioned above) is to teach and train her own children along with her husband and under his authority. The presence of other children in her home may provide an opportunity to share the gospel or to encourage believing children in their walk with the Lord. This would certainly be appropriate. However, to conduct a regular time of Bible study with children not her own would be to function as a teacher of Scripture outside the realm of her own family and be in conflict with the prohibition of 2 Timothy 2:12.

5. *How does the prohibition of 2 Timothy 2:12 concerning women teaching impact things like reading a book written by a woman or attending a Christian workshop or public presentation given by a woman?*

The answer depends on the kind of book or presentation. There are many wonderful opportunities to learn from godly, older women through their writings or possibly in a public setting when the focus is in line with what Paul encouraged older women to do in Titus 2, or even in areas where encouragement is needed. The right book might even serve as a basis for discussion concerning the role of a godly wife or mother in the home or aid her by means of encouraging words or thoughts. However, if in her writing or speaking a woman assumes the role of a teacher (one who is expounding/teaching the Scriptures or setting forth doctrine) this would be in conflict with the prohibition of 2 Timothy 2:12. As with anything we read or attend, there is a need for wisdom and discernment. Having an understanding of what the Scriptures teach will help in determining if a woman is overstepping her role in these areas. (update note: a the present time, though not currently fully updated in this paper, the notion that a book by itself constitutes being a teacher seems to be at odds with the description given in Scriptures. The Bible, as our greatest source of truth is God's given instruction, yet even this ultimate form of truth calls for a person to teach it. Naturally, any books should be compared to the Scriptures irrespective of who has written it.)

*Supplemental Comments:* In this case, as with many other application questions, there is no black and white answer. The word of God must guide each of our consciences as we seek to walk in obedience with the Lord. Husbands and wives together will often be able to sort out specific answers to their unique situations and questions based upon a clear understanding of the relevant texts. As always, the Elders stand ready to help bring understanding to particularly difficult situations as the need arises.

6. *What if a husband and wife disagree with the conclusions of the Elders of Southside Bible Church in this area (women teaching)?*

The elders realize that our understanding in this area is more restrictive than is commonly held by other conservative churches in our society and that members in our congregation may have developed different convictions in this area over the years. We would ask that those who have, carefully and prayerfully consider from the text of Scripture why we have come to our conclusions. It is important to

understand what being a teacher is from a Biblical perspective. This will be helpful in resolving some natural difficulties with our view on this matter. If after careful consideration there is still disagreement then those in disagreement must consider if they can live graciously with our position and without promoting a position contrary to that of the church.

Concerning women in this congregation attending Bible Studies taught by other women we believe it is wise to avoid such a practice. Given our understanding of the Scriptures, for a woman to do so essentially places her supporting an activity that we believe should not occur. We will counsel against such activity but recognize that a husband and wife must make the final decision concerning the wife's practice in this area. However, if they disagree with the church's position it would be inappropriate to propagate their view within the congregation.

If a woman and her husband are in disagreement with the church's position regarding a woman being a teacher (and are or desire to do so) we again desire for harmony to be maintained within the congregation and ask that they do not propagate their view within the congregation. Also, to this end, we request those that are not in agreement to please read the full exposition of this issue in the Special Studies paper on the roles of women, and to speak with the Elder's regarding their alternative understanding of this practice.

## Conclusion

Proverbs 31:10-31

- 10 An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.
- 11 The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain.
- 12 She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.
- 13 She looks for wool and flax And works with her hands in delight.
- 14 She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar.
- 15 She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens.
- 16 She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard.
- 17 She girds herself with strength And makes her arms strong.
- 18 She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night.
- 19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle.
- 20 She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out her hands to the needy.
- 21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet.
- 22 She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple.
- 23 Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land.
- 24 She makes linen garments and sells *them*, And supplies belts to the tradesmen.
- 25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, And she smiles at the future.
- 26 She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
- 27 She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness.

28 Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband *also*, and he praises her, *saying*:

29 “Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all.”

30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *But* a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

**31 Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates.**