

## **God's High Calling for Women, Part 2**

Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:10–11

Code: 54-15

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the problems facing Timothy at Ephesus was the women in the church. Some were usurping the role of men, desiring to be the official teachers of the church. Others were desecrating the worship service by coming with wrong attitudes and dressing improperly. Their behavior contradicted their profession to know and worship God. In First Timothy 2:9-15 Paul gives instruction on the role of women in the church--a topic relevant to today as well.

### **REVIEW**

**I. THE APPEARANCE OF WOMEN (v. 9a, c)**

**II. THE ATTITUDE OF WOMEN (v. 9b)**

### **LESSON**

**III. THE TESTIMONY OF WOMEN (v. 10)**

"But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. "

#### **A. The Importance of a Woman's Testimony**

Paul is concerned that a woman's testimony be consistent. The Greek word translated "professing" (epangell[ma]o) means "to make a public announcement. " Any woman who has made a public announcement about her commitment to the Lord should conduct herself in a manner consistent with such a profession.

"Godliness" (Gk. , theosebeia) has the basic meaning of reverence to God. When a person claims to be a Christian, he is claiming to worship and serve God. Any woman who claims to serve and worship God should conduct herself in a godly way. To do otherwise would bring reproach on the name of Christ.

#### **B. The Desecration of a Woman's Testimony**

Verse 10 points out a major problem with the contemporary women's liberation movement in the church. A woman who wants to serve and honor God cannot show disregard for what He says about the role of women in His Word.

### **C. The Substance of a Woman's Testimony**

The testimony of a woman professing godliness is a life of good works, for righteous deeds demonstrate the genuineness of her faith. The same is true for anyone.

## **IV. THE ROLE OF WOMEN (vv. 11-12)**

"Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. "

The Greek word translated "learn" (manthan[ma]o) is in the imperative voice, indicating it is a command. Paul commands that women are to be taught. Since this section of 1 Timothy is discussing how the church is to conduct itself (cf. 3:15), the learning Paul speaks of was to take place when the church met. We see from Acts 2:42 that learning was a high priority when the early church gathered together. Paul commands that women are to be a part of the learning process; they are not to be excluded.

---

### **Women in First-Century Judaism**

One of the problems in the Ephesian church was that some of the Jewish believers were still holding on to their Judaism. They were preoccupied with genealogies (1 Tim. 1:4), and some desired to be recognized as teachers of the law (1 Tim. 1:7). Part of contemporary Jewish tradition of that day was a low view of women, who were not usually given opportunities to learn. They were not forbidden to come to the synagogue, but were not encouraged to come either. Most rabbis refused to greet women in public, and felt that teaching them would be a waste of their time. While women were not completely forbidden from learning, they were certainly not encouraged to do so. They were mostly ignored.

The contemporary Jewish view of teaching women had no doubt led to a certain amount of suppression of women in the church at Ephesus. In reaction to that extreme position, some of the women determined to rise to the leadership level. First Timothy 2:12 shows us they were teaching and exercising authority over men, and Paul had to tell them to stop. But before dealt with the problem of women usurping the role of men, he first settled the question of whether women have a right to learn. His brief statement "let the women learn" shows us there's an equality of the sexes in spiritual life and blessing.

---

## A. In the Old Testament

In spite of Jewish tradition, the Old Testament did not teach that women are inferior in spiritual matters. The Old Testament teaches that women are spiritually equal to men, but have a separate role.

### 1. Their spiritual equality

a) They had the same responsibilities as men

(1) To obey the law

In Exodus 20 the Ten Commandments are given to both men and women. From the very beginning, God laid down the principle that both men and women are responsible for obeying His laws.

(2) To teach the law

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 tells us that both men and women are responsible to teach their children to obey God's law, and to love Him with all their heart. Proverbs 6:20 says, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. " The assumption here is that both sexes are responsible to teach the law of God to their children, which means they must know the law of God.

(3) To participate in the festivals

We read in Exodus 12 that both men and women were involved in the Passover, one of the greatest celebrations of the Jewish calendar.

b) They had the same protection as men

Penalties given for crimes against women are the same as those for crimes against men (cf. Ex. 21:28-32). God values equally the life of a man and the life of a woman.

c) They took the same vows as men

The greatest vow a person could take was the Nazarite vow. It was a vow of separation from the world, and devotion to God. Women as well as men could take the Nazarite vow (Num. 6:2). The highest level of spiritual commitment was not restricted to men.

d) They had the same access to God as men

God dealt directly with women in the Old Testament; He didn't go through men every time He wanted to communicate with them. For example, the angel of the Lord (a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ) appeared to Hagar (Gen. 16:8-13), and the mother of Samson (Judg. 13:2-5).

e) They had the same privileges as men

Women as well as men served God in special ways. Nehemiah 7:67 tells of a choir made up of 245 singing men and women. They led the people to praise God through music. According to Exodus 38:8 women served at the door of the Tabernacle, possibly to instruct women who were coming to worship or to clean the Tabernacle grounds. From such passages as Deuteronomy 12:10-12, 1 Samuel 1, and 2 Samuel 6 we learn women shared in the great national celebrations of Israel. Women had the same responsibility to obey the law and teach it to their children as men did. They participated in the religious life of Israel and served God. The Old Testament--far from giving women a secondary status--grants them spiritual equality with men.

### 2. Their separate role

Although women shared spiritual equality with men in the Old Testament, that does not mean they had the same role as men. Nonetheless that does not in any way diminish their spirituality.

a) They did not serve as leaders

There were no women rulers in the history of either Israel or Judah. (Deborah, who we read about in Judges 4-5, was a judge. She acted primarily in the role of an arbiter, not as an ongoing leader, which explains why she called on Barak when needing military leadership against the Canaanites. Queen Athaliah, who we read about in 2 Kings 11, was a usurper and not a legitimate ruler. ) There is no mention of women priests in the Old Testament. As far as we know, no woman wrote any portion of the Old Testament.

b) They had no ongoing prophetic ministry

There is no woman in the Old Testament who had an ongoing prophetic ministry such as that of Elisha or Elijah. There are five women in the Old Testament who are referred to as prophetesses.

(1) Miriam

Miriam was the sister of Moses, and is called a prophetess in Exodus 15:20. She is called a prophetess perhaps because she gave a very brief revelation in verse 21. We know of no other occasion when she ever acted in the prophetic office.

(2) Deborah

Deborah is described as a prophetess in Judges 4:4 because she was used by God to give a direct revelation to Barak. We know of no other occasion when she engaged in any kind of ongoing prophetic work.

(3) Huldah

Huldah gave revelation from God to Hilkiah the priest and other men about the coming judgment on Jerusalem and Judah (2 Kings 22:14-22; 2 Chron. 34:22-28). There is no other recorded instance of her speaking as a prophetess.

(4) Noadiah

Mentioned in Nehemiah 6:14, Noadiah was a false prophetess who opposed the work of Nehemiah in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

(5) The wife of Isaiah

Isaiah's wife is called a prophetess in Isaiah 8:3 because she gave birth to a child whose name had prophetic meaning. There is no record of her ever speaking a prophecy. This passage indicates that the term "prophetess" could be used in a general way.

The Old Testament differentiates the role of women from that of men. That doesn't indicate women are in any way inferior to men; it's just that God has different roles for each

## **B. In the New Testament**

### **1. Their spiritual equality**

This is clearly set forth in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. " In the context of Galatians 3, the oneness spoken of here is the oneness of salvation. That is clear from verses 13-27. Paul's point is that all people, Gentiles as well as Jews, slaves as well as free men, and women as well as men, have equal access to the salvation that is in Christ. The passage has nothing to do with the role of women in the church, nor does it teach that all differences are eliminated among Christians. Certainly a Jewish person did not cease to be Jewish when he became a Christian, and slaves did not automatically become free men. Some distinctions are retained.

a) They had the same responsibilities as men

All the commands, promises, and blessings of the New Testament are given equally to men and women. We all have the same spiritual resources, and the same spiritual responsibilities.

b) They had the same access to Jesus as men

The first person Jesus revealed He was the Messiah to was a woman (John 4). Jesus healed women (Matt. 8:14-15), showing them just as much compassion as He did men. He taught them (Luke 10:38-42), and allowed them to minister to Him personally (Luke 8:3). At His cross, after all the men had fled, the women remained (Matt. 27:55-56). The first person to see the resurrected Christ was a woman (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18).

2. Their separate role

a) They did not serve as leaders

There is no record in the New Testament of a woman apostle, pastor, teacher, evangelist, or elder. Nowhere in the New Testament is any sermon or teaching given by a woman.

b) They did not have an ongoing prophetic role

Some would argue that the daughters of Philip are said to have prophesied (Acts 21:9). However they are not referred to as prophets, nor is there any indication of how often they spoke. It may be that they spoke on only one occasion, as Deborah and Miriam apparently did in the Old Testament. The New Testament records other occasions when women spoke the Word of God. Mary, the mother of Jesus, did so in her Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). 1 Corinthians 11:5 says that women who prophesy are to have their heads covered. Acts 2:17 speaks of women prophesying. The Greek word translated "prophesy" simply means "to speak forth" or "to proclaim." There are times and places when women speak the Word of God, but that is distinctly different from being identified as a pastor, teacher, elder, evangelist, or apostle.

## CONCLUSION

Women have a very important place in the plan of God, and are on an equal level with men in terms of spiritual life. However they are not to function in the same role as men. Because women are spiritually equal Paul insisted that they be given the same opportunities to learn as men. How can women teach spiritual truth to their children (like Timothy's mother and grandmother did), lead people to Christ, or obey God if they are not given the opportunity to learn? Paul wanted it clearly understood that the differences in roles between men and women do not in any way imply the spiritual inferiority of women. That's why he said "Let the women learn" (v. 11).

## Focusing on the Facts

1. What were some of the problems relating to women in the Ephesian church?
2. Why is important for a woman's testimony to match her profession of faith?
3. The testimony of a woman professing godliness is a life of \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. According to Acts 2:42 \_\_\_\_\_ was a high priority when the early church gathered together.
5. In your own words, summarize the place of women in first-century Judaism.

6. True or False: The contemporary Jewish view of women influenced the way women were being treated in the Ephesian church.
7. True or False: The Old Testament, in agreement with Jewish tradition, teaches that women are inferior spiritually.
8. Name some of the spiritual responsibilities women shared with men in the Old Testament.
9. How did the role of women in the Old Testament differ from that of men?
10. Does Galatians 3:28 teach that all differences between men and women have been eliminated? Explain.
11. Did Jesus treat women as inferior to men? Support your answer from Scripture.
12. Why is it important for women to learn spiritual truth?

### **Pondering the Principles**

1. The church at Ephesus had been influenced by the prevailing views of society regarding women. The same could be said about the church today. In this as in other areas, the church has been influenced by the world instead of being an influence on the world. Are your views of current issues being shaped by the prevailing opinions of society, or by God's Word? Perhaps you need to rethink your position on such issues as women's roles, abortion, homosexuality, the creation- evolution controversy, the Christian's responsibility to the government, lawsuits, and divorce and remarriage. Spend some time in prayer and ask God to give you the courage to take a stand on the issues based on His Word--no matter what society propagates. Then pray that the church as a whole will also stand firm for God's truth.
2. Jesus ministered to all types of people, even those whom His culture considered inferior. He ministered to women, the poor, lepers, and tax collectors. Are you selective in whom you allow yourself to get involved with? Do you reach out to the difficult people and strangers at your church and Bible study group, or do you play it safe and stick just with your friends? The next time you see a person in need and are tempted to turn away from him because he isn't part of the "in crowd," remember the example of Jesus, and the words of James in James 2:1-9.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2026 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).