

First Timothy 2

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul discusses public worship. His two biggest points:

1. Global prayer for the local church
2. Men and women and their behavior within God's household

Remember, in 1 Timothy 1, Paul urged Timothy to take control of the false teachers. His letter was written instruction to him regarding verbal information he had already passed on earlier. This letter was written to Timothy to address a specific issue going on with the church at Ephesus, but it also is relevant for us today. As we discussed last week, the word of God is inerrant and God-breathed. While some text appears historical and contextual, the Bible in its totality is a love letter to us from God and an instruction manual for godly living. 1 Timothy informs all believers how they are to act as a part of God's household (aka the Church).

First Timothy 2:1–2:

Paul uses the words, "First of all." This signifies importance and urging (urgency).

The false teachers were changing doctrine which Paul believed was compromising the Gospel. He urged Timothy (as well as all future believers) to guard, celebrate, and fight for the Gospel. So how does Paul say we accomplish these three things? He said we should start with prayer.

The Church's prayers should not be limited. Believers are to pray for ALL people. The Church is on a life-saving mission. We are not a country club or on a permanent vacation until Jesus returns. We (men and women) have a commission by God to reach the lost with the Gospel. It is not ours to limit or decide who gets the gift. It is our job to share God's gift with the world.

Prayer = influence

Our prayers (and our lack of prayer) have significance and influence. Have you ever witnessed answered prayer? Do you think the answer was by chance?

Paul uses four different words in verse 1 dealing with prayer: **pray, petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving.**

Petition is making a meek and humble, earnest plea for a specific need for something significant requested of GOD. It would be something that you cannot get or accomplish without GOD'S help and you ask HIM to make it happen for you or for others.

Intercessions are prayers for others.

Thanksgiving is the act of giving thanks; grateful acknowledgment of benefits or favors, especially to God.

Whom are we to pray for? Everyone. The word “all” in verse 1 means:

1. Pray for every kind of person. Pray for one another not just people who are like you.

- In the case of the church at Ephesus, both Jews and Gentiles were now together as one (1 Corinthians 12:13, “Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.”).
- Remember, the false teachers were limiting salvation to the religious elite. There were lots of teachers who didn’t quite understand the full Gospel (think Apollos)...even he had to be taught more by Priscilla and Aquila (and he was a preacher at the time!).
- Paul says in these verses that there is absolutely no category of person you should not pray for.

2. Pray for leaders in high positions.

- Even if you don’t like or agree with the leaders in charge, pray for them (1 Timothy 2:2).
- Whether we like it or not, the kings, presidents, and others in charge effect the quality of our lives. Here Paul is saying, “If you want peace and quiet, pray for the kings and rulers”.
- Why is this important? Because if our kings, rulers, presidents, law makers, etc. are not aligned with God as their authority and surrendered to Christ in their personal lives, every single decision they make is filtered through the world instead of God. It is God who changes the hearts of men and women (Proverbs 21:1). He asks us (the body of Christ) to be

in prayer for them. We should be praying for their salvation and increased godly wisdom. If they are saved, we should be praying for more of the Holy Spirit in them. God sets kings and rulers in their positions (Daniel 2:21, Romans 13:1). Many times, He is not only testing the faithfulness of the king, but also the faithfulness of the people.

- Paul, in this letter, was writing under the reign of Nero. Nero was a Roman emperor who violently persecuted Christians in the first century. By praying for this horrible persecutor, Paul was urging the church at Ephesus to be like Christ who intercedes for all because it God's will that all be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).
- **Practical application for us today:** Instead of getting frustrated or angry at the news, drop to your knees and pray for all those in charge. Anger and frustration in the hands of the Almighty always leads to an opportunity for grace. Prayer changes your heart. Who wants to continually live in a frustrated and angry state? Not me!
- Paul was urging the church at Ephesus to pray a Matthew 5 prayer not a Psalm 5 prayer. Paul wasn't saying to pray for destruction of your enemies, but instead to pray for the salvation of your enemy (1 Timothy 2:3).

3. What do we pray for?

- Pray for peace amid persecution so the Church may flourish, even though sometimes the biggest church growth takes place amid persecution (perhaps because the Church is leaning in through prayer and unity).

- In the time Paul was writing this letter, there was a period known as *Pax Romana* or *Roman Peace*. This allowed for roads to be built and trade routes to be established. This road literally paved a way for the Gospel to spread throughout the Roman empire.
- We pray not only for peace amid persecution, but we also pray for the salvation of the persecutors. **John Chrysostom, an early church father, said, “It is much more difficult to hate someone when you are praying for them.”**

The progress of the Gospel in the world is dependent upon the prayers of God’s people in the Church. You won’t spread the Gospel to ALL if you don’t love ALL. For whatever reason, God has enabled us to participate in His plan of salvation through our prayers. Don’t take that privilege lightly.

First Timothy 2:3–6:

So far, Paul has told Timothy whom and what to pray for, but what drives God’s people to pray for these things? Our motivation behind praying for ALL is God’s passion for ALL. There are three key theological motivations behind our call to prayer.

1. The people of God should pray because God desires the salvation of all people.
 - However, at the outset, know:
 - Not all will be saved. Ephesians 2:8–9 and John 3:36 make it clear that His gift of grace is available to all but not all will accept the gift (i.e., have faith and belief).
 - His will is never thwarted. God IS in control.

- God loves ALL people...whether we do or not.
2. God deserves the honor of all people (1 Timothy 2:5). “There is one God.” “One God” drives missions. There is but one. Isaiah 45:21b–22 says, “For there is no other God but me, a righteous God and Savior. There is none but me. Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other.”
- We honor God through:
 - Prayer
 - Corporate worship/praise
3. We pray because Christ died for the rescue of all people.
- 1 Timothy 2:5–6 “one mediator and ransom for all.” Jesus was our ransom.

First Timothy 2:7

As we pray to God for all people, we preach the Gospel to all people.

1. We herald (announce) the Cross of Christ
2. We teach the commands of Christ

Revelation 5:8 speaks of gold bowls filled with the prayers of the saints. **“And when he took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.”**

What kinds of prayers have you deposited into these bowls? Whom have you prayed for? Whom have you not prayed for? What kinds of prayers are you willing to deposit into these bowls? Are they honoring to God and His desire for all to be saved?

First Timothy 2:8–15

Divisive men in the church.

In verse 8, Paul first addresses the divisive men in the church at Ephesus. Verse 8 is tied both to what was discussed in 1 Timothy 1 and what comes next in 1 Timothy 3 as it relates to elders and deacons.

The first seven verses of 1 Timothy 2 tell who to pray for and what to pray for. Now, Paul is telling the people who they need to be as they pray.

The men in Ephesus may have not been leading in prayer at all. At best, they were praying in the church while fighting with one another. “Every place of worship” in verse 8 refers to wherever the people of God gather. This could be the church, homes, marketplace, etc.

The physical posture of the pray-er wasn’t as important as the purity of their heart. The term “lifting holy hands” references surrender and submissiveness to the One in authority. It was also a demonstration of open and clean hands. During this time, there were pools of water people washed their hands in before prayer. The water had no special function other than to symbolize an act of submission and purity before God.

Paul was telling the men to submit to God’s authority and make sure their hearts were right with God. He wanted them to stop fighting with

one another and to pray for one another. **There is enough work to be done outside the church without so much fighting within the church.**

It is so hard to pray before a holy God with an impure heart. It is ineffective because our hearts are not lined up with the will of God. If they weren't pondering the things of God, they weren't loving God. And, if they were fighting with one another, they weren't loving others and forgiving others as Christ had commanded.

Paul was reminding the people of Jesus' words in **Matthew 5:23–24**, **"So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God."**

Practical application for today: During your prayer time with the Lord, make sure you are right with God before you begin to pray. A short time of asking God to search your heart (as the Holy Spirit convicts), and a time of confession is a good place to start.

A right heart is crucial for God-honoring worship. Far too often, we rush into worship without getting our hearts right. No wonder we feel detached from the body of Christ at times!

The false teachers in Ephesus and the disputes within the church at Ephesus were causing disagreements and distractions. Paul instructed Timothy that it needed to stop. Men needed to lead the way in prayer and in worship. They needed to focus on being the head and lead well.

First Timothy 2:9–10

Distracting women in the church.

Paul addressed a couple of issues in these two verses as it related to women's appearance.

1. Physical beauty.

- Paul addresses the issue of dress in Ephesus for a number of reasons.
 - Ephesus was filled with sexual immorality. It was common for women to use fancy clothes to attract attention, sometimes in seductive ways. Often, prostitutes would adorn themselves in such a way as to let people know they were available.
 - Paul instructs women to dress modestly.
 - **Practical application for today:** If our thought process on a Sunday morning (especially) is, "What is going to make me look the most attractive to others or get the most attention," our priorities may be out of whack. Don't allow the way you dress to be a stumbling block for someone else (whether that is making someone feel ashamed because they don't look like you or have your nice clothes, or whether that be drawing attention to a part of your body that a man might start thinking about). All kinds of sin begins when we start the spark with a "me focus" instead of a God focus.
- We should not be ashamed of the natural beauty we have because God designed us. Don't be frumpy just because you are a woman.

2. Worldly wealth.

- Apparel and jewelry have been used throughout the centuries as a way to distinguish social status. Paul is exhorting the women in the church to bring unity not

separation within the church. By adorning themselves with fancy clothes and jewelry, they may have been causing and/or deepening the rift between the wealthy and the poor (or the Jews and the Gentiles).

- Paul says instead of adorning themselves with fancy jewelry, their works should be the things they are known for. Our lights should shine because of who we are and whose we are, and we should be known by our good works for God's glory (Matthew 5:16). If people talk more about the kind of trinkets we wear, we might not be doing things that give them better things to talk about.

Many in this congregation may have been pagans who followed the goddess Diana of Ephesus (Acts 19:24–41 describes this goddess in Ephesus). Diana was known as the goddess of the hunt, moon, and nature. She swore off marrying. She was the one who commanded animals. Much can be said about this, but in a limited scope, Diana was the opposite of Adam. It was Adam whom God gave to have dominion over animals. Ephesus was a city struggling with God's perfect design and perhaps it was even more evident as pagans became new believers. They needed to be instructed on God's design, not the design of other gods.

Paul was telling the women to stop attracting attention to themselves and instead focus on God. He was instructing the women in the church at Ephesus that they needed to look different than the world. If they continued to look and act the same as they did before they came to know Christ, people would have a hard time distinguishing them from the world. Paul instructed Timothy to instruct the women to stop doing this.

First Timothy 2:11–12

These two verses are some of the most controversial verses in all of Scripture. It is these kinds of verses that make me wish I was physically present when they were said to understand exactly what Paul was addressing.

We've already discussed what was taking place in Ephesus. It was a city that was immoral and completely messed up. Sometimes we have to look at Scripture through the context and culture, but we also have to be careful not to limit Scripture to just that culture and context because if we do, we might begin to limit the authority of the apostolic teaching in its totality.

So then, what was Paul saying here? I wish these verses were switched in order with chapter 3 that we will discuss next week. Why? Because the definition of an elder is in chapter 3. Specifically, Paul says that an elder is a man. So, in this context, a woman is automatically eliminated from being able to teach solely on the fact that Paul says in 1 Timothy 3 that an elder must be a man, and he must be able to teach. Elders could only be men. Elders were the teachers in the church setting. If you didn't meet the qualifications of an elder (we'll discuss what these are next week), you couldn't be an elder. This applied to both men and women.

It is in this context that we look at what Paul says and remember he specifically says, "I do not allow." Paul never says that God doesn't allow.

In the context of the people of Ephesus, the pagans (or Gnostics) were known to "babble" loudly; sometimes disrupting services. In his letter to the church in Corinth written a few years before this letter to Timothy, Paul also talks about women and men being silent during church services (1 Corinthians 14). He was addressing the issue of order during worship. Lots of people were talking all at the same time. Paul never prohibited

women from praying or prophesying in the church, but he did tell them to be orderly about it. The people in Ephesus may have been influenced by the goddess Diana and her power thus resulting in a misunderstanding of the female role in God's order.

Paul did allow for women to teach just not in the position of an elder as defined in 1 Timothy 3. Later in Titus, Paul discusses the role of older women teaching younger women, as one example.

Two things that should be considered as it relates to women teaching:

1. As a woman teaches or leads, is she reflecting God's pattern in Scripture?
2. As a woman teaches or leads, is she reinforcing God's priorities in the home?

First Timothy 2:13–15

These verses are often controversial in church settings. To begin, let's understand the meaning.

1. God's design in creation: God gives authority to men.
 - Ladies, whether we like it or not, man was made first.
 - This statement is not culturally relevant; it is central revelation. It is revealed to us through Scripture. (Genesis 1–2)
 - Satan distorted God's design by going to the woman first. He deceived the woman and she made the choice to eat the fruit and then gave it to her husband. She didn't ask the husband, first. And, the husband blindly accepted the fruit. We saw the consequence of this twist (sin). Paul may be preaching from this context. When the divine order of God is out of place, Satan may

distort things. This applies not only to women but a whole host of other issues.

2. Is 1 Timothy 2:15 talking about the significance of women nurturing children?

- Only women can bear children. It is a special role given to only women.
- The role of the woman was declared broken by God because of sin in Genesis 3:16, **“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.”**
- God’s original intent was for man and woman to be complimentary to one another, but sin resulted in a struggle for control.
- Bearing children does not save a woman.
- A woman who never bears children can be saved.
- The false teachers had stirred up trouble in the church and had instructed people not to marry. This false teaching messed up God’s order and the “go forth and multiply” sentiment of God. If people stopped marrying, women would stop having children (especially in the context of marriage). This wasn’t about population growth or about population control; it was more an issue of the heart. If people continued to give in and follow the false teaching, they were being duped, and sinful choices might result. The only way for anyone (male or female) to live in the power of the Holy Spirit is to do the things God calls us to do. If we stop having children because a false teacher tells us to stop having children, we are following the doctrine of man and not the instructions of God.

Was Paul speaking a:

Universal Interpretation – Gendered roles should be ordered according to the Genesis 1-3 account. While it may not be understood until the coming age, it is not the ideal for the present time. Women should never be allowed to teach men or have authority over men (domineering attitude or authority).

Polemical Interpretation – Paul was addressing a particular situation addressed by the false teachers within the Ephesian church. This teaching was disturbing family relationships. The women may have been asserting female dominion (especially thanks to Diana the goddess of Ephesus), and putting blame on Adam (may be why Paul brought up the garden context). Paul's intent was to quiet the false teachers, including the women who participated in any way in the false teaching.

Cultural Interpretation – Not necessarily directed to a local problem (highly unlikely), but to a larger issue of a patriarchal society. Women were not afforded a lot of opportunity for schooling so they may not have been qualified to teach. Only properly qualified people should lead the church. Paul had a tendency to fully engage women in ministry (Galatians 3:28, 1 Cor 11:5, Acts 18:26, Romans 16:1–7) so excluding all women was not likely.