

Affirming the Goodness of Manhood & Womanhood in All of Life

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1 Timothy 2:13-14

For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

I promised last Sunday that I would pick up today where we left off in 1 Timothy 2:13. You recall that in verses 11-12 Paul said, "Let a woman learn in quietness with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; but to be in quietness." After studying the words "quietness" and "teach" and "authority", we came to the conclusion that the kind of teaching which is inappropriate for women is the teaching that is part of expressing the authority spoken of here in verse 12.

What authority is being spoken of here? The clue was found in this: the two things that are mentioned here as inappropriate for women (teaching and exercising authority over men) are the very two things that define the job of an elder in the church - to govern and to teach. This is most easily seen in 1 Timothy 5:17. Elders (=pastors, overseers) are charged with two spheres of responsibility: governance and the guardianship (or stewardship) of doctrine.

Therefore the authority of 1 Timothy 2:12 is most probably the governing authority of the eldership, and the simplest way to describe what is inappropriate for women from this verse is to say that Paul did not think it was appropriate for women to be elders in the local church.

We summed it up with two definitions: of authority (v. 12) and submission (v. 11).

"Authority" refers to the divine calling of spiritual, gifted men to take primary responsibility as elders for Christ-like, servant-leadership, and teaching in the church.

"Submission" refers to the divine calling of the rest of the church, both men and women, to honor and affirm the leadership and teaching of the elders and to be equipped by them for the hundreds of various ministries available to men and women in the service of Christ.

These definitions are intentionally parallel to the definitions of headship and submission and marriage which we learned from Ephesians 5:

Headship is the divine calling of a husband to take primary responsibility for Christ-like, servant-leadership, protection and provision in the home.

Submission is the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts.

The reason this is important to see is that both in the case of church order and family order Paul is basing his teaching on God's original order in creation. Paul is not arbitrarily choosing roles for men and women, nor is he simply adapting to the cultural expectations of the day. He is saying that there is something about the way God set things up in the beginning that makes this kind of order good. In other words true manhood and true womanhood mesh more effectively in ministry - they are better preserved and better

nurtured and more fulfilled and more fruitful - in this pattern of home and church than in any other pattern - because God made it to be this way. It is part of His gracious design for the good of men and women.

Now that brings us to verses 13 and 14 of 1 Timothy 2. In these verses Paul gives two reasons for saying that men, and not women, should bear the primary responsibility for leading and teaching the church.

For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

There are two reasons given here. Let's take them one at a time. First in verse 13, "Adam was formed first, then Eve." The point here is very simple, and we dealt with it already in the message from Genesis 2 and 3 (and handled objections there). Paul sees in God's order of creation a teaching concerning the responsibility of man to be a leader in relationship to woman. God created man first, put him in the garden, gave him the responsibility over the garden and the moral pattern for life in the garden, and then created woman as his partner and assistant to help him carry that responsibility into action.

In other words when Paul teaches that men should bear the primary responsibility for governance and teaching in the church he is basing it not on any culturally temporary situation at Ephesus but on something woven into the fabric of manhood and womanhood by virtue of our creation. Not on the basis of sin, but on the basis of how God wanted it to be before there was any sin - for the good of his people, both women and men.

The second point from verse 14 is this: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." Now most commentators in the history of the church have taken this very simply to mean that women are more vulnerable to deception, and therefore should not be given the responsibility of leading and teaching the church. My guess is from what I have read and experienced that women are more vulnerable to deception in some kinds of situations and men are more vulnerable to deception in other kinds of situations.

Let me insert a parenthesis here that I think will really help us in talking about the differences of manhood and womanhood. Whenever anyone asks me if I think women are, say, weaker than men, or smarter than men, or more easily frightened than men or something like that, I almost always answer like this: I think women are weaker in some ways and men are weaker in some ways; and women are smarter in some ways and men are smarter in some ways; and women are more easily frightened in some kinds of circumstances and men are more easily frightened in other kinds of circumstances.

It's real dangerous to put negative values on the so called weaknesses that each of us has. Because God intends for all the "weaknesses" that characteristically belong to man to call forth and highlight woman's strengths. And God intends for all the "weaknesses" that characteristically belong to woman to call forth and highlight man's strengths.

So even if this verse means that in some situations women are characteristically more vulnerable to deception, that would not settle anything about the quality or worth of manhood and womanhood.

Statistics I just read say that six times more men than women are arrested for drug abuse. Ten times more men than women are arrested for drunkenness. 83% of serious crimes in America are committed by men. Twenty-five times more men than women are in jail. Virtually all rape is committed by men.

I point that out to show that boasting in either sex as superior to the other is a folly. Men and women as God created them are different in hundreds of ways. And I believe that being created equally in the image of God means this: that when the so-called weakness and strength columns for manhood and for

womanhood are added up, the value at the bottom is going to be the same for each. And when you take those two columns from each side and lay them on top of each other, God intends them to be the perfect complement to each other, so that when life together is considered (and I don't just mean married life), so-called the weaknesses of manhood and the so-called weaknesses of womanhood don't make the whole weaker but stronger.

Is the eye of a needle really nothing but air? Or is it the indispensable "nothing" that makes the needle work? Is hunger nothing but a pitiful need and an empty stomach? Or is it the messenger of health and the seasoning of our food? If you believe that manhood and womanhood are to complement rather than duplicate each other, and if you believe that the way God made us is good, then you will be very slow to gather a list of typical male weaknesses or a list of typical female weaknesses and draw a conclusion that either is of less value than the other.

End parenthesis.

Now having said all of that, let me take you back to Genesis 3 to show you what I think 1 Timothy 2:14 means when it says, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor."

The first thing to notice in Genesis 3:1 is that Satan in the form of a serpent spoke to the woman and not the man. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman . . ." Paul saw this, and believed it had significance.

The second thing to notice is that Adam is evidently with Eve while Satan is talking to her. When we come to verse six and the woman is about to eat of the forbidden fruit the verse says (most literally from the NASB), "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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her (NIV: who was with her) and he ate." It does not say that she went to get him. It does not say that he arrived on the scene after the serpent was gone. It moves directly from the words of temptation to the act of eating and says that the man was with her.

The third thing to notice is that God disapproves not only of the eating of the fruit but of the way the man and woman related to each other here. In Genesis 3:17 God reprimands man like this: "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." The words, "You listened to the voice of your wife," are very significant. There is no record in chapter three that she said anything to Adam directly. But there is good reason to believe that Adam was there listening to her interchange with the serpent, and falling into line with her.

So what we saw several weeks ago was that God's reprimand is not merely a reprimand that Adam ate the forbidden fruit but also that he forsook his responsibility to be the leader and the moral guardian of the home. Satan's subtlety is that he knew the created order God had ordained for the good of the family, and he deliberately defied it by ignoring the man and taking up his dealings with the woman. Satan put her in the position of spokesman and leader and defender. And at that moment both the man and the woman slipped from their innocence and let themselves be drawn into a pattern of relating that to this day is destructive.

I think this is what Paul means in 1 Timothy 2:14. Let me try to paraphrase it to bring this out. "Adam was not deceived (that is, Adam was not approached by the deceiver and did not carry on direct dealings with the deceiver) but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor (that is, she was the one who took up dealings with the deceiver and was led through her direct interaction with him into deception and transgression).

If this is right, then the main point is not that the man is undecivable or that the woman is more deceivable; the point is that when God's order of leadership is repudiated it brings damage and ruin. Men and women are both more vulnerable to error and sin when they forsake the order that God has intended.

So Paul's argumentation in 1 Timothy 2:11-14 is that men ought to bear primary responsibility for leadership and teaching in the church (that is, be the elders): 1) because in creating man first God taught that men should take responsibility for leadership in relation to woman and 2) because the fall of Adam and Eve shows that the neglect of this divine pattern puts men and women in a more vulnerable position and leads to transgression.

Let me close by saying a few words about the relationships between men and women in general apart from marriage and church order. The fact that the meaning of manhood and womanhood is rooted in creation shows that it is relevant in all of life, not just marriage and church. Books could be written on this. So I am taking a big risk in a few minutes of very selective application.

1. A word to single men in personal relationships with single women. First, let's not pity ourselves too much over the fact that most young men grew up in homes where dad was not a great model for how to be a strong spiritual servant-leader. Let's grow up and stop shifting responsibility. Here we are with all our male weaknesses and insecurities and we have some things to learn and they can be learned. We can do what God expects of us, if we trust Him.

Namely, He expects that single men in relationship to single women will bear primary responsibility for a pattern of initiative. I say pattern because a man's responsibility is not compromised by occasional initiatives of women, for example, to get some guys together. But I can say with complete confidence that almost no women want that to be the pattern. And God doesn't.

I think the reason many guys do not take this kind of initiative is that they are afraid of rejection. That certainly was true for me. Things haven't changed much. I think the only reason I am married today is because of an accident that God made happen. Noel and I found ourselves in a fine arts room in the basement of Fischer Hall with several common friends and accidentally talked for two hours. And that was that.

From nine years of watching the single scene at Bethlehem I'll tell you what I see and what I hear: there are a lot of intelligent, attractive, spiritual single women in this church who are not church hopping to find husbands and who trust God enough to be a happy single person if that is God's will. But 99% of these women would not mind it if a group of guys in this church took the initiative to get together with a group of them. (Twins game. Picnic in the park. Rent a good video and have pizza. Visit old-folks home. Take some inner city kids to the zoo.)

I stress the group approach just because the emotional stakes of being rejected are so much higher when you go it alone. It seems far more natural and helpful to me to let individual relationships grow out of a lot of group gatherings. And in both kinds of relationships it is the men who bear the responsibility for the pattern of initiative.

(And don't let your fears and inadequacies hinder you. The first time I ever tried to put my arm on the seat behind Noel I elbowed her in the eye. And look at us! Twenty years of marriage and I can hardly wait for her to get back from Guatemala.)

2. The one other thing I have time to say is something very brief about the issue of women in the work place. What about leadership of men there?

My answer is probably going to be dissatisfyingly general rather than specific. But that's because the Bible does not address this as clearly as marriage and the church and because the nature of leadership in many jobs is so fuzzy.

I give my answer in the form of a principle. Leadership can be measured on two scales or continuums: on a scale of directive to non-directive and on a scale of personal to impersonal. Let me illustrate.

Personal-Impersonal

A woman who designs the traffic patterns of city streets exerts remarkable leadership over all the drivers in that she determines how they drive. But this leadership is very impersonal. On the other hand the relationship between a husband and a wife is very personal. All leadership falls somewhere on the scale between very impersonal (little personal contact) and very personal (a lot of personal contact).

Directive-Nondirective

A drill sergeant is the essence of directive leadership. On the other hand non-directive leadership is much closer to entreaty and suggestion. A good example of non-directive leadership is when Abigail talked David out of killing Nabal (1 Samuel 25:23-35). She was totally successful in guiding David's behavior but did it in a very non-directive way.

My principle then is this: To the degree that a woman's leadership of man is personal it needs to be non-directive. And to the degree that it is directive it needs to be impersonal. To the degree that a woman consistently offers directive, personal leadership to a man, to that degree will his God-given manhood - his sense of responsibility in the relationship - be compromised. What's at stake every time a man and a woman relate to each other is not merely competence (that is very naive), but also whether God-given manhood and womanhood are affirmed in the dynamics of the relationship.

I feel like what I have done in this series is simply show you that there is a beautiful ballet to learn and an exciting drama to be a part of. It's more beautiful and more exciting because we are so different as male and female. My challenge to you is that you now take up the script of God's word and ask him to help you learn your personal part. The world is in desperate need to see what the true drama of manhood and womanhood really looks like.