

Is God a Male Chauvinist or does He actually honor women? (Part 2)

God's point in 1 Timothy 2:8-15 is not that women must take a backseat to men, that they must have babies and become mothers, that the only roles open to them are domestic. God's point is about proper behavior of *both* men and women. When it comes to men, He wants them to give up arguing and fighting and instead take responsibility for the position of authority God gave them. If the men of Ephesus don't stop bickering and fighting (1:4) and instead *properly* (1:7, 19-20) take up their positions of teaching and authority in the church, then like Adam they will have failed to lead. Likewise, if the women don't exhibit a submissive and self-controlled spirit in their dress (2:9-10) and behavior (2:11, 15), then they will have failed to fulfill their God-given role. God's reasons for all this go back to the created order, i.e., man was not created for the woman, but woman for the man (2:13 cf. 1 Corinthians 11:8-12—but the man is not to abuse his position of authority; his very existence depends on the woman). Therefore, motherhood is not the point of the passage but submission of *both* men and women to their God-given roles is.

“She will be saved through childbearing” why is this offensive today? The third point here is this: how should all women see childbearing? As something much more fulfilling than any career. The ideal wife was an independent businesswoman, yet what brought her glory and honor was her role as wife and mother (Proverbs 31:28-31). And rather than being insignificant and meaningless, motherhood is one of the most important roles in the world. Mothers shape the future men and women of the church and the world. Without mothers, not only is there no human race, without the love, nurture, and guidance of mothers, every little boy and girl is off to a bad start. Can women have career and family? Absolutely, the ideal wife had both, but her career was never at the expense of her family; her career served her family (Proverbs 31:10-31). Thus, if God gives a woman business skills (Psalm 139:13-16), He expects her to use them, but He expects her to know what's truly important—this must be true of men too, i.e., family before career also applies to men.

Do women play vital roles in the church or do they just perform domestic duties? First, what role did God give women? They're to be the helpmate to the man (Genesis 2:18). In general, this is God's built-in authority structure. That is, God is over Christ, Christ is over man, and man is over woman (1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-12). And this authority structure tells *all of us* (men, women, and Christ) that being under authority is not demeaning or to be avoided. It's a privilege and honor, which is why Christ willingly submitted to the Father's authority, even though He was equal to Him in power and glory (Philippians 2:6-8). Second, as a helper, what things can a woman do for the world and the church? She can bear children and raise the next generation who, like Christ, will take up the Father's call to accomplish His will (Genesis 1:28; Proverbs 1:8; 1 Timothy 2:15). But her role may also include running a company or serving a key role in ministry (1 Samuel 25; Proverbs 31:10-31; Luke 8:1-3; Acts 16:14-15; 18:26; Romans 16:1-4; Philippians 4:2-3), as she honors God's authority structure (Proverbs 31:11-12, 23). And notice, the husband of the Proverbs 31 wife doesn't make her submit. Instead, he wisely encourages her God-given role of co-reigning with him (Genesis 1:28). Third, there's always an authority structure starting with the Godhead: the Spirit and the Son are under the Father. God designed all of life this way; there's always someone at the top. But He never intended for those under authority to feel less than or demeaned. Any man who dishonors any woman will answer to God (e.g., 1 Peter 3:5-7). Fourth, the role of any particular woman will depend on her God-given gifts and abilities (Psalm 139:13-16) and her willingness to submit to God's authority structure. She may be a CEO who blesses her company and family (Proverbs 31:10-31). Or she may be a wonderful housewife who blesses her husband and children with everything she does (Titus 2:4-5) and she's blessed with joy in return (Proverbs 31:13).

Sarah and Abigail, submission is anything but weak, in 1 Peter 3:1-6 God tells women to submit to their own husbands, even if their husbands are disobedient to Him. They must trust God and not be afraid to submit to their husbands, like the holy women of old, like Sarah who obeyed Abraham and called him lord. Does this mean that Sarah had no say at all? Not in the least; sometimes submission means strongly advising your husband (Genesis 21:8-14). Sometimes it means teaching a king who's about to make a rash and foolish decision (1 Samuel 25—notice Abigail's wisdom, strength, independence and submission).

Why do women sometimes take the position of authority? It's a combination of several factors: (1) the curse that resulted from mankind's fall (Genesis 3:16—instead of submitting, she will want to dominate him and he will dominate back), (2) our sinful nature rebels against God's design for women (Mark 7:21-23; Romans 8:7), (3) no one has shown them what it means nor how to be strong, independent, yet submissive women, and finally and perhaps more importantly (4) when the man fails to lead, provide, and protect, then the woman will fill that void (Judges 4). Someone has to lead and decisions have to be made. If the man fails in this responsibility, then the woman will necessarily take over.

This is why it's crucial that men ask themselves in the church and elsewhere, "Am I fulfilling the responsibility God gave me?" When God set the roles, He set the man as the leader, the one in authority and the woman as his helper (Genesis 2:18). But this helper role was never to be as a second class citizen; the woman's role is equal to the man's in that both are commanded to reign (Genesis 1:28). Thus, the man and woman have different roles: he leads, she follows, but both are rulers. And for a woman to feel truly fulfilled and not demand equal rights as defined by today's feminist culture, there has to be a role for her to play. In the church for example, if women are relegated to Sunday school, preparing food, planning social events and cleaning up, then the men have failed to lead and provide the women their roles of co-ruling.

What about single mothers? Is God saying that mothers are the only ones to be honored? What use is 1 Timothy 2:8-15 to grandmas, single mothers and single women? First, the point of the passage is submission to God's authority structure not praising motherhood. Remember, having kids doesn't save you, having kids + continuing in love, faith, godliness, and self-control does. Why was Sarah praised? Not because of her motherhood, but her submission to the Lord's demand that she submit to her husband (1 Peter 3:5-6). Why was the Proverbs 31 wife praised so highly by the Lord and her husband and kids? Because she submitted to and respected the Lord's authority structure (Proverbs 31:11-12, 23, 28-31—"but a woman who **fears** the Lord, she shall be praised"). The women Paul praised were not praised because of their motherhood but because they worked alongside him in ministry (Romans 16:1-4; Philippians 4:2-3). Second, 1 Timothy 2:8-15 applies to all women, not just mothers. Single mothers need to recognize God's authority structure so that they can submit to this authority structure in the church, teach their sons and daughters to be men and women who do likewise, and to protect themselves from not wanting to let go of the authority in the home if they find a man to marry (since they've been playing both roles in the home as single mothers). Single women need to understand this passage for the same reasons single mothers do. For grandmothers, they can play a crucial role in teaching younger women how to respect God's authority structure in the church and in their families (Titus 2:4). Everyone must understand this passage because we all become someone else's mother, father, etc. (Mark 10:29-30).

Women are co-rulers alongside men; they are not second class citizens. They may play a different role, but they are co-rulers with men. When both recognize their God-given roles and apply them as ordained by God, both are fulfilled and neither feels slighted or demeaned.