

## God's Given Roles

The inspired writer, Paul, instructs Timothy by saying, "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8). Note how the Holy Spirit inspires Paul to write, "That the men pray everywhere." Paul continues, "In like manner that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation... which is proper for women professing godliness with good works" (1 Timothy 2:9-10). Paul furthers, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, but to be in silence" (1 Timothy 2:11-12). According to Thayer et al. (1996), the word men here is the Greek word *aner* meaning, "a man...with a reference to sex, and so to distinguish a man from a woman..." Regarding the spiritual side of our physical life, God expects the men to the lead. This is applicable to the assembling of the saints as well as other situations where male and female Christians may find themselves.

More and more commonly in our society, women are taking on the God appointed role of men in the realm of spirituality. Sadly, such is even being allowed in some local churches of Christ. Considering the total context of Paul's inspired words to Timothy we see these verses have a broad application. God is prohibiting the woman in any way from having authority (spiritually) over a man. Clearly, Paul is stating that any practice (leading a prayer, leading singing, serving the Lord's Table, preaching, elder, deacon) which places a woman in a role of exercising authority over a man is sinful. God explains through Paul that this subordination is based on the creation (1 Timothy 2:13-15).

The statement that a woman is not “to have authority over a man” (1 Timothy 2:12) is not an application of the principle of subordination, but is a clear statement of the principle itself. The conclusion is undeniable to the one who accepts God's will over their own. That being, a woman can never occupy a position of spiritual authority, whether in public or private settings. There is nothing in the context, language, or otherwise, that would limit this passage to public worship, even though we can properly apply it to public assemblies.

These scriptures are inspired by God Himself (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The words Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:8-15 provide a general principle governing women in the work of the church. Her role is that of quietness and her position is that of submission. Therefore, it is obvious that a woman would be in violation of this injunction were she to be a public preacher with both men and women present, a Bible teacher of a mixed class of both men and women, an elder, a deacon, a song leader, a prayer leader, an officiate at the Lord's Table, or making announcements before assembly. Any teaching she does must not be in an authoritative role over the God given role of the man. This is God's directive and counsel and is not Pauline prejudice in manifested form as liberalistic minds contend. Paul asserts the same God directed principle in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Rejecting Paul's teaching is rejecting the teaching of Christ Himself, who by the authority of God, delivered the perfect law of liberty (Matthew 23:18, John 12:48, James 1:25).

Thayer, J. H., Grimm, C. L. W., & Wilke, C. G. (1996). *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Hendrickson Publishers.