

Fact Sheet for **“Saved through Childbearing?”**  
**1 Timothy 2:8-15**

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**<sup>8</sup> ¶ I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; <sup>9</sup> likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, <sup>10</sup> but with what is proper for women who profess godliness-- with good works. <sup>11</sup> Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve; <sup>14</sup> and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. <sup>15</sup> Yet she will be saved through childbearing-- if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.**

This is clearly one of the most difficult passages to interpret in the NT. What do you do with the statements the apostle Paul made here? Should women keep quiet in the church, have absolutely no positions of any kind of authority over a man, and certainly not be in any situations where they teach men? Or... can we say that culture has changed? Women have many more rights and opportunities now than they did in Paul's day. Many women are more highly educated than some men. What Paul wrote here fit his culture, but those thoughts are obsolete with ours. Can we set aside Paul's words as simply being for another time and place? Or... is there another way of understanding this passage? And then there is verse 15. Are women saved through childbearing? Is this an addition to John 3:16? What about women who have never borne a child? Are they lost? Let's take this passage one step at a time.

**Can we set aside Paul's words because our culture has changed?**

No. Consider what Paul wrote to Timothy in his second letter (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Only Scripture is breathed out (or inspired) by God, and therefore has God's authority for what He wants us to know. Culture changes according to our own social and political climate. It is not inspired by God. If we let the values of our culture determine that some of the statements of the Bible are obsolete then we have placed culture as more important than God's Word for what we believe. This path to interpreting the Bible has far reaching implications. Are same sex relationships right or wrong? Our culture clearly says they are OK. The Bible clearly says they are sin. The Bible records that God created Adam and Eve. Our society says that, from our advanced scientific understanding, we evolved. Our political climate places emotional value, but not truth, on every religion. However, look at Jesus' words in John 14:16. Scripture has to trump culture every time. Our culture cannot with authority deem some of the Bible obsolete.

Let's look at some facts, beginning with a few individual words. The word for "quietly" and "quiet" in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 speaks of an inward calm tranquility. It is the opposite of causing a disturbance. This word does not mean absolute silence.

Now I have to take a rabbit trail because no discussion of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is complete without referencing a Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 14:34-36. The word translated "silent" here is a different word than "quiet" in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, and it means absolute silence. But the word "silent" is also used twice more in the immediately preceding context (verses 27-28 and 29-31). Three different groups of people were to keep silent for a reason that Paul would state in verse

40. A closer look at the whole context of 1 Corinthians, and chapters 12-14 in particular, will leave you with the impression that some women in that particular church were driving in part some of the theological problems in that church. This was a role they should never have taken.

Could that be what was happening in the church at Ephesus where Timothy was? It's a possibility. If you read through 1 and 2 Timothy you will come *repeatedly* across a couple themes. 1. There was some bad teaching from both men, and very possibly from some women. 2. That bad teaching had led some to problems with their life choices.

Take a look at another word... "saved" in verse 15. When we think of the word "saved" we think of the Gospel (see for instance 2:3-4). But it can't possibly be referring to the Gospel in verse 15. The word "save" can also have the meanings "rescue, liberate, keep from harm, keep safe." When Paul wrote "**Yet she will be saved through childbearing**" he was referencing a role for women that only women can have. Men are excluded from bearing children. Childbearing is a role for women (in general terms) that God created in His perfect design for humanity. God created men (again in general terms) with a different role. We'll talk about that in a minute. Paul was simply reminding Timothy that women do not have the main teaching role in the church.

Notice too that this whole passage (verses 8-15) has much to do with the outworking of our faith with a good conscience and purity of life. And notice that Paul does not go to culture to support his words about the role of women, but to creation. Men were created by God to have a different role, as the primary leaders in the family and as the primary leaders and teachers in the church. That's why 1 Timothy 2:8-15 is followed *immediately* by a discussion of overseers (elders, pastors) that focuses on character, a discussion where there is no place for women overseers as the main leaders in the church. This is consistent not only with that culture but also with the whole Bible. You will not find women elders anywhere in the OT or in the NT. It is a gender-specific role. However there is a role for both men and women in other positions of authority in the church... deacons and deaconesses.

And consider this. Throughout history godly women were held in great esteem. They had positions of authority, and even taught men (Judges 4:4; Ruth; Luke 8:1-3; Acts 18:24-26; Colossians 4:15; 2 Timothy 1:5).

Now I want you to imagine what the local church was like in Paul's day. There was no Sunday School until the late 1700's. The church started out in the book of Acts with no buildings, other than homes. There would have been no buildings with Christian Education wings, no nurseries, no life groups, no youth groups, no church by-laws, no conferences, no books, no Master of Divinity degrees. There were however weekly services, prayer meetings, and service projects. Who taught? The Elders, overseers, pastors.

Every time we add another detail to Christian ministry we need to make some decisions as to the proper role of men and women in that detail. Can a woman be a professor at a Bible School or Seminary, preparing men for the pastorate? Can women teach adult women? Can they properly be called pastors? *In my mind this confuses the understanding of the gender-specific role of elder/overseer/pastor.* Can women teach men in a small group or Sunday School setting? What if a man shows up when a woman is teaching women? Should he be asked to leave? Can a woman missionary speak even briefly in a Sunday Worship Service? Should we only guard the elder/overseer/shepherd role as male only? Ultimately the leadership of each local church needs to make these decisions, with a view to not violating Scripture. Read the passage again with these thoughts in mind.