

Think About It: Making sense of the the most misunderstood and misused passages of the Bible

Part 4: Is the Bible against Women?

1 Timothy 2:11-12

Intro: 1 Tim 2:11-12... Whoa! What?! That's super offensive!

These sentences found in the NT, along with a few others, have been debated, argued over, caused churches to split, and even been used as ammunition in recent culture wars...

Is there a better way forward than simply fighting and dismissing each other?

I think there is... with some good tools and a bit of study we can discover some pretty amazing truths... so let's talk about it... together...

WE: Many people have rejected the Apostle Paul, the biblical writings, and even all of Xianity b/c of the apparent Sexism/chauvinism in these verses.

Don't blame them... Many people have used these exact verses to justify their own sexism/chauvinism.

Even if it doesn't come to that, Xians often judge each other based on their interpretation of these verses as either ignorant, backward, sexist woman-haters or heretical false teachers who have given in to the worldly culture and only want to tickle the ears of modern listeners.

In fact, there is a very real chance that some of you watching/listening will decide whether or not to ever listen to me again/and whether I'm a "true xian" based on what I say in the next 20 or so minutes.

Nothing divides Christians better than misused and misunderstood bible verses.

Could do a few episodes on this issue... someday we probably need to... but for now, how can we read this passage and understand what's going on?

First take a breath. If this is a big deal for you, either side, I get it. It's important.

But maybe with the right tools and a bit of grace for each other, we might not completely settle this issue for all of xianity, but we can look at the passage and at least try to understand each other.

Give ourselves permission to look at things from a different angle and really dig into the world and meaning behind the BW's

Jesus can use the biblical writings to change our hearts if and when we are willing to change our minds.

So what is Paul saying here? Due to time restraints I'm going to leave out a lot that could be said but I think we can still get a good overview of what we're dealing with...

GOD: Rhythm.

Discover Genre and Historical Context

Bible Dictionary...

1 Timothy is a... **Pastoral Epistle**- Written by Apostle Paul (though debated) to his protege, Timothy a little b4 60 AD.

Instructing Tim how to lead the church in Ephesus.

Where are we in 6 Part Play?

Part 5, The Church- Jesus' D&R has brought something new. A new Kingdom that operates completely differently from the kingdoms that have come before it.

1st thing we see from that little bit of information... Paul is writing to a church leader about church things- so whatever he is saying, it has nothing to do with our communities at large... he is not saying God is against women presidents, bosses, leadership, etc.

- You'd think I wouldn't need to say that but sadly I do.

Ephesus

Capitol of Roman province of Asia Minor- SW corner of Turkey today... 3rd largest city in Roman Empire

A lot of income from trade and tourism to Temple of Artemis

A lot of artisans that could improve their social class by being successful and accumulating wealth.

Artemis worship in Ephesus

- Temple 1 of 7 wonders of ancient world
- Daughter of Zeus... Twin of Apollo, but older
- Seen as Mother Goddess- source of life that nourished all creatures
- Goddess of fertility... could either save or kill women during childbirth.
- A Female led cult in Ephesus

Acts 19 and Ephesus

- Paul there over 2 yrs
- Got famous/people burned their magic stuff worth millions of dollars
- A person named Demetrius, a silver Smith, built shrines to Artemis and was not keen on losing his money and Artemis losing prestige
- He started riot where the people are shouting "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians"- two hours in the amphitheater

Why is all of this important?

A biblical passage can only make sense now if we understand how it made sense then.

To help with that we go to our next step...

Read the Context of the Whole Text (With Epistles, read the whole thing in one sitting as you would any letter)

Discover the main point of letter: False teachers, thinking they were great teachers of the Law of Moses but actually didn't know what they were talking about.

- Telling people it was wrong to be married and to eat certain foods

A lot of arguing and debating over genealogies/myths/meaningless speculations

All of this has caused disruption in the unity of the church, even disturbing their church gatherings.

So, Paul's concern is the unity and witness of the Church in Ephesus.

Paul says knock off all of this arguing and debating (sound familiar?)... here's what you should be like...

2:1-4 Quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity... that's what you should be known for.

Here's how men can do that... **2:8** In other words, guys (men), stop bickering with one another and get your attitude towards others and God straightened out- love God and your brothers & sisters.

And then Paul explains how the women in Ephesus can promote unity... the next few verses have caused people for centuries to do the exact thing Paul just said not to do... argue and bicker!

Engage the Text - Ask questions

2:9-10 Modest? Like no two piece bathing suits? Depends on how much it cost... and why wearing these things.

Look up Greek word there for *modest* on Blueletterbible.com= means honorable/self-controlled

What saying is... Not to use the way they dress (fancy clothes/jewelry) to draw attention to themselves... show how wealthy/important they are compared to others...

People who are devoted to God, should be known by the good lives they lead, not what they put on the outside.

2:11-12 Ok, let's focus on the positive first

In a world/culture where women didn't have equal status with men... literacy was the exception... Paul is expecting that JF women are learning about Jesus equally with the men.

- Which is huge for that time and culture.

But even though they should be learning, he says they should learn submissively and quietly...

Ok... Why? What reason does he give?

2:13-14 Adam and Eve?

Ok this is getting weird. If taken just at face value, Paul is saying women should be quiet in church b/c Adam was made first and Eve was deceived.

- Some have taken this to mean... all men are superior to women b/c man was made first
- And all women are more gullible/easily deceived b/c Eve was deceived first.

That can't be right can it? What the heck is going on? I'm really not liking this passage so far...

- Maybe Paul clears things up at the end...

2:15 Huh?

Women should be quiet and submissive and will be saved ("Go to heaven") if they have babies and continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty

So if a woman doesn't have babies she can't go to heaven?

Seriously, what is even happening right now?

This is why we don't just stop here... when it comes to passages that confuse/bother/offend us we need to pause and see if we are understanding things properly...

When passages don't seem to make sense we have two options: Give up or dig deeper.

Debated passages can force JF's to either dig further into their entrenched opinions or dig deeper to a fuller understanding.

So let's dig deeper... **Ask the Experts** (Can they answer some questions for us?)

Now with a debated passage like this I consult a few experts... for sake of time I'm going to paraphrase a few

1st the modest thing- We can see we were on the right track... Most experts agree that some women in Ephesus were somehow disrupting the church gathering by flaunting their wealth by wearing expensive clothes... trying to show they were better than the poorer women in the church.

And so Paul says... that is not how things work in the Jesus Community... your monetary wealth means nothing... what matters is how wealthy you are in good deeds. (Which he reiterates in **6:18**.)

Ok what about the no authority and no teaching quiet submission thing?

A good commentary will point out that there are two main views on this...

- Meaning Jesus loving/following scholars who take the BW's seriously have different views on the exact meaning of this... so important to take it easy
- Both views come from people trying to clearly understand and stay true to the true meaning of scripture.

Unity means being able to disagree and still love like a healthy family.

1st position: Clear, black and white plain meaning... the tradition I was trained in...

Paul is prohibiting women from teaching and holding authority over men in the Church as a whole for all time and all places.

- Women were flaunting their new freedom in Jesus and trying to have authority and destroying unity by trying to take a role that was/is reserved for men.
- Their role in a church gathering / worship service is to be a quiet submissive learner. They should not teach or question during the service
- Women should be fully submissive to male authority within the church .
- Paul uses the Adam and Eve account to show this is binding for all churches b/c it goes to the very nature of God's intention for the roles of men and women.
- The example of Eve being deceived, doesn't mean women are gullible, but it is a warning about what happens when women reject God's natural hierarchy and try to assume authority over men.
- The part of childbirth is either saying the proper place for a Xian woman is to embrace her role as the caretaker of the home... or that it is actually saying that she will be saved through the birth of THE Child... Meaning Jesus.

2nd position: This is situational to the specific situation that was happening in Ephesus.

A group of women within a culture of female-led pagan religion, influenced by the false teachers, were teaching heresy in the church and trying to usurp the authority of the male leaders who were already in place...

Paul is telling them to stop... and calling them to the mutual submission and unity he called this church to in **Eph 5:21**

It is a local/temporary rule instead of a universal rule.

In his commentary, Towner says something very important... p. 81 **"We run the risk of misusing 2:8-15 if we make it a proof text in our modern debate."**

Meaning this one passage will not/cannot/should not answer the question of what women's role in the church is/should be...

A passage's whole meaning needs to make sense within the whole story of the BW's.

So the experts who agree with the 2nd position will take us to other passages that talk about the role of women in the Jesus community...

1 Cor 14- Paul talks about Orderly Worship... Gatherings shouldn't be a crazy, free for all.

- **1 Cor 14:34-35**- Position 1 experts say seems pretty clear cut. Paul is consistently giving two churches the same orders.
- But Position 2 Experts say... Not so fast... In 1 Cor 11 Paul talks about women praying out loud in the gathering and even prophesying... speaking to the congregation on behalf of God.
- So then these verses can't mean what they seem to mean at face value...
- They explain that there must be something going on at this specific church in Corinth, just like in Ephesus... In the context.

- These experts explain that these Corinthian women were disrupting the services by questioning their husbands during the teaching...
- And even questioning the prophecy their specific husbands were teaching...
- EX: If I said.. Jesus wants men to give themselves up for their wives as he gave himself up for all of us" ... and Liz said... "Oh really? Where was this when I was needing help with the kids yesterday?!"
- Again, think of how chaotic and confusing this would all be with so many people talking, questioning, clarifying, teaching all at the same time. Kind of like a Jerry Springer episode where nobody can hear what anyone else is saying.

These experts argue that these passages(1 Tim and 1 Cor) need to be seen within the context of the overall story of God presented in the BW's... **that the new JF communities were completely revolutionary in the honor/dignity/roles it gave to women...**

Examples:

In all four Gospel accounts... the authors make a point to say that it was women who were entrusted to be the first to "preach the good news" after Jesus resurrected.

Passages that talk about the spiritual gifts God gives people... including teaching... implies he gives to both men and women.

1 Peter- all holy priests (priesthood of all believers... not just men/husbands)

Gal. 3:28 revolutionary nature

Romans 16- Commends Phoebe to them as a leader in the church (traditionally the one who took letter to Romans and read it and taught it, and answered any questions about it... big deal)

And then in the same chapter Paul greets a bunch of church leaders including many women... Priscilla named before husband (in ancient writings meant that she was given the place of higher honor/importance)

Junia named as an apostle (likely a female as this is a woman's name)

Some experts also turn to the historical context of Ephesus...

One interesting idea says that in this passage of 1 Tim, Paul is guiding Timothy on how the new JF community differs from the pagan culture of Ephesus and how to keep it from seeping into this new Jesus movement...

1st heard about it in an article describing a book by Gary Hoag who studied the worship of Artemis in Ephesus in 50 AD

As said at beginning... The Cult was female led

Women would show their devotion to Artemis through their extravagant clothes/hairstyles.. Flaunt their wealth and commitment by looking like Artemis

- So Paul says, you might be used to flaunting all of this in your past religion, but following Jesus is different. You don't show devotion/religiosity thorough what you wear (Sunday best) but you how your love of Jesus through what you *do*.

Artemis' worshippers were to be assertive, competitive, vocal... serve piously and compete fiercely... argue for Artemis!

- So Paul says, JF's don't argue... we are quiet and submissive to each other as Jesus modeled by serving and washing the feet of his own disciples.

They believed Artemis created humanity therefore Artemis (and her female worshippers) were superior to men. Also believed evil was brought to the world by man.

- So Paul brings in the Adam/Eve account... women were not made first and are not superior. Both Adam and Eve brought in evil.

Artemis was the goddess of fertility and childbearing... and there was a lot of pressure on Ephesian women to be loyal to Artemis. The consequences of offending her were... death during childbirth.

So instead of some confusing idea about having babies saving women... Paul is giving hope/confidence to these new JF's that they don't have to fear angering Artemis b/c they belong to Jesus and he will protect them through their delivery.

Fascinating... see how understanding the original context helps passages make sense in our context?

So how do all these thoughts/research/digging help us understand our 1 Tim passage?

At the very least, it shows us there might be more going on then we might first assume... We need to be careful not to make sweeping theological claims upon all of Christianity b/c of a few sentences written to the pioneering Jesus followers in ancient Ephesus.

When it comes to difficult passages we need to take Paul's command seriously... **ALL JF's should learn quietly and submissively.**

None of us have the entire picture perfectly clear here...

YOU: **Do something with it**

So as we learn more and more about our place in God's story and our role to play now... we need to keep in mind

Romans 12:16

Read that this verse daily this week

Ask: What is more important to Jesus... to be right or to be united in love? What is more important to me?

Pray: Jesus, Help me live in harmony with others and use what I learn to love others.

WE: Within this revolutionary community of JF's... There is room for differences.

If we are first united in love... then we can explore the BW's together... learning from and listening and giving grace to each other.

We will discover more and more of who Jesus is, and what OUR role is in his kingdom

So yes... Do your research with an open heart and mind. Trust God to guide you to the truth... not with a goal of more knowledge but with a goal to discover who God truly is and what love looks like in your life now...

When the Church's goal is loving unity in Jesus, theological differences lose their power to divide.

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Summary:

Many people have rejected the Bible and even Christianity as a whole because of the apparent sexism and chauvinism found in the biblical writings. In addition, Christians often judge and argue with each other based on their own interpretations of these verses.

But, with the right tools, an open mind, and a bit of grace for each other we might be able to give ourselves permission to look at things from a different angle and try to understand each other a bit better.

Main Points:

Nothing divides Christians better than misused and misunderstood bible verses.

Jesus can use the biblical writings to change our hearts if and when we are willing to change our minds.

A biblical passage can only make sense within the context in which it first made sense.

Debated passages can force JF's to either dig further into their entrenched opinions or dig deeper to a fuller understanding.

Unity means being able to disagree and still love like family.

A passage's whole meaning needs to make sense within the whole story of the BW's.

When it comes to difficult passages... ALL JF's should learn quietly and submissively.

Weekly Challenge:

Read: Romans 12:16 daily

Ask: What is more important to Jesus... to be right or to be united in love? What is more important to me?

Pray: Jesus, Help me live in harmony with others and use what I learn to love others.

Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out to, bothered, or challenged you from this week's episode?
2. From "It's incredibly important to me" to "I didn't even know it was an issue," what has been your personal experience with this subject of gender roles in the Church?
3. Read Romans 12:16. Did you learn/discover anything new about those who might think differently than you on this subject?

4. Jon closed this episode by saying, “When the Church’s goal is loving unity in Jesus, theological differences lose their power to divide.” How can we, as a local expression of the Church, not allow theological differences to divide us?
5. How can your group pray for you this week?

Episode Resources:

Dictionary/Encyclopedia: www.biblegateway.com and www.blueletterbible.com

Genre/Narrative/Theme Videos: www.bibleproject.com/

Further Resources on this topic (both sides represented):

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Je_BU2dpEJhgS1wUPSU7gP5lvyrXN83qmCPbyI5ZVyU/edit?usp=sharing

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SHOW NOTES

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| READ THE TRANSCRIPT → <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/media/2022-07-24.pdf>



| SAY HELLO, ASK A QUESTION → <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/welcome/>



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| FOR SALEM in JULY → Hope Pregnancy Clinic

We are collecting diapers (size NB to 6), wipes and baby board books at our gatherings in July. You can also shop direct via their wishlists. Find out more about Hope Pregnancy Clinic here: <https://hopeforsalem.org/>

Amazon wishlist: <https://a.co/3rn8zPt>

Target wishlist: <https://www.target.com/gift-registry/giftgiver?registryId=b09b19f2118e4ce1ba38d81b204d0237>



| FOR SALEM in AUGUST → Ice Cream FOR Everyone

Meet at Wes Bennett Park in South Salem on Sunday, August 21st to hand out free ice cream in the afternoon. Why? Because God loves them, and loves to give gifts. More details forthcoming, but mark your calendar.



| GATHER TOGETHER → <https://www.yourcrosscreek.com/#gathering> |

Upcoming Dates: July 24th and August 14th + 28th



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