

Diving Into 1 Timothy **Understanding the Scriptures**

Up to this point in the course, we have taken a pretty broad look at Women's Ministry. We spent a little time looking at key women in the scriptures, understanding how women's ministry has changed over the years, and recognizing the change women's ministry is heading toward in the future. We have explored how to change the direction of your existing ministry and executing events, selecting bible studies, and really understanding who it is that we are serving through our programs. For those of you who may not have a women's ministry in your church, we even went through the basics in starting a ministry from scratch, including finding and developing new leaders.

We are going to shift focus at this point, and move from that broad view and begin to examine some really important facets about women's ministry. As God calls more women into ministry service, besides equipping them for the task at hand, these women are also going to lean on God to get beyond many of the hurdles women in ministry face. We've touched a little on this topic in previous sessions, but it's time to really take a look at the difficulties related to being a woman in ministry.

This past year, I attended a conference that was predominantly geared toward Pastors. The bulk of the significant "staff" members at this conference lean toward the complementarian stance on women in pastorship. In other words, they are not for it. Because many of the Pastors would be bringing their wives with them to the conference, they were certain to include workshops that would interest them. These workshops included focus groups on "women's ministry" groups, Q&A session for women interested in seminary, and several others that were more personal in nature. Of course, we were not limited to these workshops either.

In the course of attending these workshops, and getting to know women throughout the weekend, I encountered something quite unexpected. There were several women who I encountered who were paid, full or part time, staff members in their church. While the exact titles of their positions varied in wording, the job description was the same. These women were paid leaders of women's ministries in their churches. I also learned that not only were they paid to do this job, but that they also had budgets from their churches for their ministry. In 16 years of women's ministry service, this was a first for me.

I suddenly began to recognize that despite having a strong stance on women as Pastors, they also had a very strong stance on women being viable ministry partners in the church. The organization recognized the value of women's ministry and are encouragers of women entering seminary for formal biblical education. They didn't devalue what a woman could do, or was capable of, but they did have boundaries and limitations.

As this began to reshape my view of the organization, I anticipated the bulk of the churches in attendance shared this same vision. Women's Ministry was important. Women's Ministry should be supported. Women in Seminary should be encouraged.

However, by the time the weekend wrapped up, I realized this was far from the case. I cannot continue to comment on this conference experience without recognizing that simply being in attendance to the conference did not automatically affirm a church as being in 100% agreement on the issue of women in ministry, or even women in pastorship. This is still a hot topic that can divide churches in the United States. Even within my own circle of friends, male and female, this is a topic that is still debated.

What did surprise me, was the number of women I encountered that couldn't even lead a formal bible study in their church. The first woman I encountered, caught me off guard. Surely in 2015 there couldn't be any question as to whether or not women could lead a bible study with other women! She was an older woman, and I suspected she must attend a small church where the head pastor was elderly and clinging to the "old ways". My assumption couldn't have been further from the truth, and she wasn't the only woman I would encounter with this story.

At the event, I was given the opportunity to sit in on a forum on women's ministry. There were many women in attendance, we looked so very different from each other. There was a panel of women who were considered influential leaders in women's ministry to answer our questions. As a woman who was leading a fairly active women's ministry, my questions for the panel were centered around getting more support from the staff. While I was struggling to find a way to get the staff to allow us to have a more active ministry... woman, after woman, wanted to know out how to get her church to do SOMETHING, ANYTHING, for women.

It was a bit humbling, in that I realized we had a lot more support than many other churches had. At the same time, it was also sobering. In a conversation with our Pastor's wife about women's ministry, she indicated that many churches don't have them in various areas of the country. I assumed these churches were too small, didn't have adequate space, or simply it wasn't needed or wanted by the women in those churches. It had never occurred to me that the reason could have been that the churches *wouldn't allow it*.

I was surrounded by women who wanted advice on how to talk their pastor into letting them lead a bible study! It didn't even matter if it was from the bible directly or a book study prepared by well known and respected authors. It simply wasn't allowed.

The question about women in leadership, I thought it was defined by the question of pastoring. The reality is that in many areas of country, and the world, the question of women in leadership is still much broader. If we are being called into these leadership roles we need to be prepared to defend it. It won't only be the Pastors in your church that will have objections. It can also come from men *and* women in the church body; and it is not just reserved for older men and women in the church ...young men and women are also in opposition. You may also find objections from within the men in your family, including your husbands. I met with a woman, who is a retired pastor, to ask her questions about her calling into pastorship. I wanted to understand the struggles she faced, the opposition. I was shocked that the first person she had to win over was her own husband.

In order to understand God's calling on women in leadership, we must start in the scriptures. It is important that we truly understand what it says, and what it doesn't. However, each of us will also have to take into account the climate and the culture of our own denominations, home churches, and our community at large. There will be some women, where stepping up into leadership will be welcomed and encouraged. There will be some women who will encounter objections and struggles along this path. Be confident in knowing that whatever role it is that God has called you to, He goes before you... and He follows behind. He will pave the way, but changes like this can take time and patience.

While I am going to reference several different resources for this portion of the course, I have structured it around some of the points outlined in the book "Women's Ministry in the Local Church" by J. Ligon Duncan and Susan Hunt. If you find yourself facing objections from the male headship of your church, this book can be a great starting point and resource to share with your Pastor... if you believe he is open minded and willing to at least discuss it with you, or consider it on his own. Please

be aware that this book does come from a complementarian view point, and will not win you any points toward getting the support of being a pastor. However, it would be foolish to think you can shift the thinking of a church from not allowing any female leadership to the extreme other end, resulting in a female Pastor. You may need to take baby steps, over a period of time. As we move forward, I will refer back to some points that I made earlier in the course, and expound upon them.

Is Women's Ministry truly needed?

Can a man teach women the scriptures? Yes. Can a man counsel a woman according to the scriptures? Yes. Can the church as a whole put together family events where women have the opportunity to fellowship with other women? Yes.

If the male leadership, and the church, can address these issues... why would a women's ministry be needed? And if a women's ministry is needed, is it necessary for a woman to lead it? After all the youth pastor leads the teenagers in the church, but he himself is not a teenager, right?

The debate over the role of women in the church isn't new, and based on my own current experiences, it isn't going to end anytime soon. But why? What could be so wrong about having a women's ministry, run by women?

Ligon Duncan expresses some of the arguments as follows:

1. *A women's ministry that becomes task driven, or personality driven; they are not biblically informed and will eventually become competitive and divisive. I've seen this first hand.*
2. *Some churches believe that if women become organized they will make demands and seek power. The irony is, that when the women feel isolated and underutilized, frustration and anger will erupt among the women. Leadership ends up creating the very thing they were trying to avoid.*
3. *There are churches who do believe that women are equally capable of anything an unordained man is capable of doing/learning. Therefore a women's ministry is redundant and unnecessary.*

The problem that exists with these three examples, is that none recognize the uniqueness of biblical womanhood. They do not celebrate the value of God's design, recognize the redemptive calling of women, and the necessity of women's uniqueness in the life and every day operations of the church. While men can do many things in a leadership position for women, that doesn't mean that men understand life from a female perspective.

In crisis, men and women respond differently.

In tragedy men and women respond differently.

In struggle, in adversity, in joy, and even in celebration ... we are different.

A woman who has suffered multiple miscarriages, understands what it like when a woman loses a baby. She understands the longing to be a mother unfulfilled, the feeling that you failed at doing the very basic thing you body was designed to do. This doesn't imply that a man is uncaring or incapable of consoling his grieving wife, or as a Pastor to counsel a woman from his congregation. And it certainly doesn't mean that a man does not grieve over the loss of his own child. Of course he would! Men and women were created differently, and so we process and grieve differently. Our emotions and thought processes are different. Despite his best efforts to be there and support his wife during a tragedy, he may not know how to do so in the way she needs. Another woman, however, understands because it is

part of how God made her. Even more so, when it is a woman who has walked that road, there is a special bonding over experience.

Even in the simple daily grind of life, women experience the world differently. Both parents may be happy that their child is finally potty trained. But, get two mothers together and it's a celebration. Dad is giving the child high fives and maybe a special toy for doing such a good job. Moms are celebrating the money that will be freed up in the budget, freedom from prepping and carrying the diaper bag everywhere they go, and the joy of never having to deal with a messy diaper again. I laughed with my own friends, when I found out we were having another child, because my lamenting was not over putting back on pregnancy weight or losing sleep at night. I was upset because we had just entered the phase of not having to bring a diaper bag with us everywhere. My husband thought I was being ridiculous, but my friends who were mothers, they understood.

In a conversation with a married couple, where both the husband and wife experienced sexual abuse when they were adolescents, each had handled the recovery process from their abuse very differently. He was able to place the blame squarely on his abuser. Yes, this history would have a huge impact on who he allowed around his own children as a parent... but as a husband, he was virtually unaffected. It was as if he compartmentalized his past. The wife, however, still suffered from nightmares and flashbacks. At times she would recoil from the touch of her husband, because something he said or did reminded her of her abuser. She couldn't just forget, or compartmentalize, what happened to her. This created a lot of tension in their marriage, because it affected their intimacy as a couple. He felt it was the past, and she should just get over it. She couldn't understand his point of view, and felt he was cold and unsympathetic to her pain. It just wasn't possible for her to "get over it" the way he did, or at least not as fast.

When she would speak with male counselors and Pastors about it, she would often get the same answers. She felt like no one understood her: maybe she was wrong for still feeling this way, maybe she was sinning because she couldn't turn this over to God. She spiraled into a deep depression, until finally a female counselor came into her life. Through this woman, the wife finally began a road toward healing. The wife needed someone who could see from the same perspective, who could help her process the trauma and slowly begin the healing process.

God made man and woman, equal in so many ways... but he also made us very different in others. This was not by accident, but served a greater good as families and communities grew. The Creator made us personal, relational beings. He made Adam, and recognized that Adam shouldn't be alone. He made Eve, someone who was not a duplicate of Adam, but different. All the things Adam needed, but was lacking, were completed in Eve. They were two pieces of a puzzle that created a big picture in the creation story. Woman was created as a helper to man, and she has fulfilled that duty since ancient times.

When there was not a suitable man to lead the Israelites, God called Deborah up to Judge. She was a servant of God, helping her fellow man. In the New Testament, women bore a responsibility to teach, lead, and guide other women. However there are many instances where God called a woman to do very specific tasks. An entire community of women may be called up into leadership based on the gifts that God has given them. This has not been an unrecognized gift to the church! In the 5th century John Chrysostom wrote: *"When women join together to perform their proper duties as corporate helpers and life givers in the family of God, they contribute to the firmness and the stability of the Church."*

Woman's design as a helper, didn't lie entirely in serving her husband, but extended into the ministry of Christ and the forward movement of Christianity, through modern times.

We, the church, need to be equipping women to be helpers of the Church and the Kingdom. They need to be trained so that they can give life, by sharing the Gospel with others, being encouragers of good works, compassionate to those who need it, and pillars within the community of integrity. Women need to understand how to do that within the context of their biblical womanhood and the spiritual gifts that God has given them. Women need someone who can explain it to them in ways that they can understand.

When I was in high school, my geometry teacher was a real guy's guy. He coached several different sports, he understood the mechanics of cars, and concepts of carpentry. Quite often he would use sport, car and building analogies in his attempt to teach us math concepts. For most of the girls in the class his analogies fell on deaf ears, this wasn't a language they understood. Jesus would often teach in parables, using terms and concepts that the people listening would understand. I have sat through many Sunday morning sermon's where a male Pastor will reference one sport or another. I have also struggled to listen as a male Pastor would attempt to relate his story to women, and you could tell he really had no clue what he was talking about.

We are different, and we see the world differently. We experience life differently.

Here is the good news... because we were created equally, we share solid fundamentals.

- Both created in God's image
- Both have God as our reference point for life
- Both are under the authority of God's Word.
- Both seek to glorify God as their purpose in life.
- Both sin, and both needed a Savior. Jesus died for all, male and female.

Our differences don't lie in these fundamentals, but in how we execute them in our daily life. We were created to be helpers to our husbands, and mothers to our children. We were designed to be in community and deliver compassion. Because of the fall, our ability to fulfill these roles has been compromised, broken. Through the redemption in Christ, we are restored to do the good works God has called us to. We create new life in more ways than just having children, but by revealing Christ to others, who die to their old flesh and are born again. This is accomplished in the quiet and gentle spirit, in which a woman lives and through her service to the community, and the church.

As our Pastor leads the flock, women are his helpers in this calling. We reach out to the women in the church (and community) as members of our family. They are our mothers, sisters, and daughters. We serve, guide, and teach. We are specifically called to pass on this instruction to future generations. We are charged with a duty, and given the spiritual gifts in order to execute this charge.

Modern day culture has changed, feminism and individualism have impacted the roles of men and women in society. There are women who no longer feel that having a husband is important, even if they have children. Single parents are on the rise, as women look to artificial means to become pregnant without even requiring a father. We see marriages where the wife dominates the man in the home, and then ironically one of the very complaints the wife will make about her husband is that she wishes he would lead. As divorces increased, daughters grow into women who don't have an

appreciation for marriage, nor understanding of what a godly marriage looks like. As women have disconnected from the family life of their church, due to busy work schedules and overbooked childrens activities, we find bible literacy amongst women dwindling, and future generations who are not being taught The Word.

A church shouldn't just *have* a women's ministry, a church NEEDS a women's ministry... but for the right reasons. We need to be:

- *cultivating godly, Christian, women who are embracing their God given femininity.*
- *promoting healthy, Christian, marriages from the scriptures as the beautiful blessing they have always been intended to be.*
- *recognizing the distinctions between the genders, and fostering appreciation of those differences.*
- *identifying the spiritual gifts endowed to women, and developing their use in the church.*

As a women's ministry plans out bible studies, brunches, and women's retreats; they will use these as avenues far greater than mere fellowship. These events will be used to cultivate biblical womanhood, build up future leaders, and support the marriages and families of these women. When led by women, the ministry can approach these issues through common ground, understanding, and empathy.

When we have a women's ministry in place it gives us a safe place to define the roles of biblical womanhood (and manhood) in an environment that not only encourages it, but models it in the correct way. We also create an environment where we can discreetly and appropriately address nitty gritty issues of the scriptures in the context of women. *“Without discounting the regular pulpit ministry of the church, we should recognize that there are certain matters more aptly addressed and applied in the context of a specific discipleship of women, whether in large groups, small groups, or in situations of confidentiality, as women minister to women.”* Therefore women's ministry gives us the avenue to create discipleship programs that are tailored to women. It is an intentional, deliberate, approach. As we cultivate female disciples, they must also have an avenue in which to use those cultivated gifts for the glory of God, and the betterment of the body.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul discusses the spiritual gifts & their use within the body of believers.

4 Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are different activities, but the same God activates each gift in each person.[b] 7 A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial:

8 to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit, 9 to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another, the performing of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another, distinguishing between spirits, to another, different kinds of languages, to another, interpretation of languages. 11 But one and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each person as He wills.

12 For as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by[c] one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 So the body is not one part but many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I’m not a hand, I don’t belong to the body,” in spite of this it still belongs to the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I’m not an eye, I don’t belong to the body,” in spite of this it still belongs to the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has

placed each one of the parts in one body just as He wanted. 19 And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? 20 Now there are many parts, yet one body.

21 So the eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" Or again, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!" 22 But even more, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those parts of the body that we think to be less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unpresentable parts have a better presentation. 24 But our presentable parts have no need of clothing. Instead, God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the less honorable, 25 so that there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same concern for each other. 26 So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it. 28 And God has placed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, next miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, managing, various kinds of languages. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all do miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in other languages? Do all interpret? 31 But desire the greater gifts. And I will show you an even better way.

When Paul wrote out this portion of scripture, it is important to recognize what he DID and DIDN'T say. We get a clear understanding of what the spiritual gifts look like (wisdom, healing, prophecy, etc). He then even goes so far as to instruct us in the ways we can use those gifts (teaching, apostles, prophets, etc). There is however no mention in these scriptures about gender. We are not told that the Holy Spirit will give certain gifts to certain people. Or that everyone will get a gift, but you can only use the gift a certain way based on your gender. He says that God gives and activates a gift in each person, and each person uses that gift to produce what is beneficial.

Each gift is given, and it is expected that you will use it. When a Pastor discounts the value of the women's ministry, this is like the head saying to the feet: I don't need you. This is not unity in the body.

And, if the church is not going to have a women's ministry, then were are the women supposed to use their spiritual gifts? How are the supposed to fulfill their calling?

He then continues on by indicating how those gifts will be used, and again, no gender is mentioned. What he does mention is that no gift is greater than any other gift, and that every part of the body has it's own job to do, and that they all benefit the greater good. Different parts, different functions, unified goal. A man and a woman, they may both be given the gift of teaching. However, the method and the audience each will teach can be very different. If you look at the human body, we have many parts that come in pairs. Yet, they are not identical. Even though they both share the same function, they do execute it in the same way. My right hand is stronger than my left, my left leg is steadier than my right.

Paul also shared his feelings on the unity of the body of believers when he wrote Galatians 3:24- 29

The law, then, was our guardian[r] until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. 25 But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ like a garment. 28 There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

Paul reminds us that we are all heirs to the Kingdom of God, regardless of where we came from, our status, or our gender. This is paramount in the scriptures, because as we enter 1 Timothy, we see Paul

speak directly against women being permitted to lead a church, and specific things women are supposed to be doing. These are the scriptures that anyone who stands against female leadership in the church will use to support their claim. Whether it be leading a church as a pastor, or simply leading a women's bible study.

As we covered in the first week of the course, there were women who Paul mentioned throughout his letters that were significant in the mission of the apostles. Women whom Paul would recognize by name, and by their contribution to the ministry. Each serving in different ways, according to the gifts and the blessings God bestowed upon those women.

Scripture never contradicts itself, but is proven by itself. For Paul to have two seemingly opposite opinions of women in these types of roles, there must be reason. And to find it, we begin in the scriptures themselves.