

Diving Into 1 Timothy **Community (1 Tim 5) & A Warning (2 Tim 3:1-17)**

1 Timothy 5 establishes our community right out of the gate, Paul reminds us that we are all part of this community. *“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and with all propriety, the younger women as sisters.”* As women, we are mothers, sisters, and daughters within the community as a whole, not just our blood relatives. When we see each other in this light, as family, we begin to desire nothing but the best for each other. We care about each other deeply... our marriages, our families, our health, our financial well being, our spiritual health. This is our covenant community. It is why baptisms are done in the presence of our church family, there is accountability with that step of faith. We are to hold each other accountable, to help each other, guide each other, and at times correct each other.

When we have community, we appreciate the family structures, and have knowledge of what is happening in the life of our church members. It equips us all to tend to each other in more effective and meaningful ways.

It is often said, when a family matriarch dies, that she was the “glue that held this family together”. Then, inevitably, someone steps up to fill that void. It might be right away, or over time as we become aware that our family has become disconnected. God created Adam, because he should not be alone. God created in a us a desire for community, and we seek it... even when we don't realize it.

As we develop godly character, we set the example in our own homes, and then we reach out into the community. That is the ministry model for not just women's ministry, but any ministry.

- God changes us from the inside out, developing godly character.
- Those changes affect our interactions within our own home & family.
- We then set an example for, and help to shape, our community at large.

This is, The Great Commission. We love God, love others, and go out and make disciples of the nations!

Without any doubt, women's ministry has played a significant role in The Great Commission. It always has, but it won't necessarily continue to do so... unless we get ourselves back on track.

The church of Ephesus was off track, and that is also revealed in chapter 5, when Paul addresses the widows. He called for the church to take care of the real widows (with no family) and for those who did have surviving family, it was the duty of those family members to care for her needs. But then he talks specifically about the young widows, who were idle gossipers, and Paul goes so far as to say that some had already turned toward Satan! He instructs Timothy to encourage young widows to remarry, have children, manage their homes, and give the adversary no opportunity to accuse. Paul was getting the women of Ephesus back on track, reordering the family, and putting women into position to protect their character.

Paul's view of women was not from someone who didn't value them, but instead from the standpoint of care and concern. He wanted to protect them from themselves, their own sin nature, as well as equip them for the long term service by encouraging them to study and refine their character.

What does this mean for women in the role of teacher, then... today? If you are going to step into a leadership position, you are taking on a noble task. You are also being held to a higher standard of behavior and living, than those whom you teach. You are to have the qualities that Paul detailed out in 1 Timothy 3, which includes not just having your personal character in order... but your home as well. It also means that you need to be a student of the word, to ensure you actually know what you are teaching to others. Positioning yourself where no man, or adversary can accuse you of any wrong doing.

History confirms that the concerns that some male leaders have about women in leadership isn't entirely unfounded. Feminism challenged men in a way they were not prepared to fight or yield to. It as if the male leadership have been trying to protect the church from the social and societal feminism. In doing so a wedge was created between man and woman. We were no longer helping each other, but competing with each other. We were no longer allies, we were becoming enemies.

This happened not just through feminism, but also through the breaking down of marriages and families. The infiltration of societal norms changing and independence on self rising. Women came to a place where they felt they didn't need men, and vice versa. As a result we have some men who are clinging to protect the last place they see as position for their gender, leading the church. They have already relented to women in the workplace and even in sports, but this was something biblical that shouldn't be messed with. Men lost value of the gifts God bestowed upon women to benefit him, their home, community, and church.

Women haven't helped the cause either. It is everywhere we look, women who are attempting to dominate men in the work place or in athletics, even on television we see sitcoms with strong female characters, and the men are bumbling idiots. Women lost value and respect for men, and the unique way they were created to lead, provide, and protect. We said: *We don't NEED you. We can do this on our own, without your help.* And men began to believe it, or at least challenged us to prove it.

God created us to be each others allies, and we turned ourselves into enemies.

This is what Paul was trying to undo in Ephesus, that still needs undoing all around the world. Paul was attempting to reorder society, not putting “women in their place”, but restoring the structure into God's original design. In doing so, we become allies for the common good... and even more so the greater good. No longer working against each other, or even independent of each other. Instead, we would be working together. Men and women, partners in ministry. Equal in creation, distinct in design, with spiritual gifts entrusted to them, and unique callings on their lives in the service of the Lord.

In the book “Half the Church” by Carolyn James, she states *“Male/female relationships are strategic. God laid out his game plan in Genesis, and the team he assembled to do the job was male and female. Men and women working together actually predates men working with men and women working with women. It would be one thing if God confined the male/female team to home and family and then mapped out our remaining territory into separate spheres for men and for women. But, he didn't do that. Their mission – together – is to rule and subdue the whole earth on his behalf. Men and women together. Our relationship with God and with each other are load bearing walls of God's original design. ... He created his image bearers male and female, blessed them, and spread before them the global mandate to build his kingdom.”*

She points out that women who disagree with their church's stance on women tend to leave and go elsewhere vs. trying to overthrow the ship. They try to find a place where they are welcomed, wanted and valued. She writes: *“They simply want to contribute, to be a part of the conversation, to be valued members of the team. They don't want to create a parallel universe in the church for women, but desire instead to be incorporated into the ministries and life of the body of Christ.”*

The truth of the matter is, when it comes to these exact scriptures ... even some of the greatest biblical scholars don't agree. So, it may be a hard task to bring your Pastor around, if he stands firmly against women in leadership or even against women teaching bible studies. I've seen this attitude in older and younger pastors alike, it's not a debate that is going to go away as our senior pastors retire. I have seen women share this attitude, we can't necessarily look to our sisters or even the Pastor's wife for support. This may be a denomination issue, or an issue because of the region you live in. It's a debate that was present in the days of the early church, and based on Paul's warning in 2 Timothy 3, it's not likely to go away until Christ comes for his church.

2 Tim 3: 1-17

But know this: Difficult times will come in the last days. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, 4 traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to the form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people!

6 For among them are those who worm their way into households and capture idle women burdened down with sins, led along by a variety of passions, 7 always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth, men who are corrupt in mind, worthless in regard to the faith. 9 But they will not make further progress, for their lack of understanding will be clear to all, as theirs[a] was also.

10 But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, 11 along with the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from them all. 12 In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, 15 and you know that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God[b] and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Scripture has indicated from both the OT and NT that there are occasions where women were called into leadership, even if that was outside the normal standards. God does as He will. His ways are not our ways, his understanding is not our own.

Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:17 *“so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*

Before we had the scriptures of the New Testament, we had the word of God. In the beginning the word was God, and the word was with God. Through him all things were made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. (John 1:1-5)

In the beginning He created the heavens and the earth, He created the land and the oceans, and all types of plants. He created the sun, moon, and stars. and all manner of creatures who flew in the skies, walked on the land, and swam in the seas. He created man to tend to his creation, but seeing that it was not good for man to be alone... He created Eve. She was his wife, companion, and helper. (Genesis 1)

The Industrial Revolution changed everything in the way we modeled our home lives and families. It is actually this time period that many who cling to “historical gender roles” refer back to. Dad goes off to work in the factory or office, mom stays home tending to the family. This is not the community of the biblical history, which was based on the team effort of man and woman working together. They raised the children together, they worked together in their fields and farms, they communed together, and they shared the gospel together, and made disciples of the nations together.

Changing the mind of anyone may prove to be difficult, especially when it is a belief that has been ingrained for generations. I would first strongly suggest than anyone who wants to attempt to affect change in the male leadership of their church, to begin this process in prayer. Second, in preparation for this quest, study. Study the scriptures, look for books that address the topic of women in leadership. Look for commentaries by well known and respected leaders, as well as commentaries written within the ten years. There has been new historical and archeological data accumulated in recent years that your Pastor (elders, church, denomination) may not be familiar with. Approach your Pastor humbly, with this calling. Do not walk into his office with a well laid battle plan. If you found good resources, bring them, and ask him to prayerfully consider the idea. Ask if he is willing to read the book/resources. Then, you keep praying. Never stop praying.

As Carolyn James puts it: *“women who disagree will leave their church and go somewhere else, the women who stay are deeply committed.”*

If you are deeply committed to changing how your church views women's ministry, this may be a long haul, patience testing, frustrating process. Stay committed, keep praying, don't just take your ball and go home. However, be sure from the very start that you are indeed the one God is calling to champion this cause in your church. Pray start to finish. If you elect to draw others into prayer with you, be certain that you do it from the humblest and purest of intentions. You are not building a battle team to fight the church, but a team of prayer warriors who are just as committed and willing to endure the long race.

2 Timothy 2:3 : *“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”*