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## A Study Guide to 1 Timothy 2:8-15

# Part 2: Can You Follow the Logic?

1 Timothy 2:11-12 has frequently been used to silence debate on gender justice among Christians. Anyone who questions the traditional interpretation of these verses as a universal prohibition on women speaking or teaching is liable to be accused of rebelling against God or ignoring Scripture. But such accusations are more likely to intimidate and stifle discussion than to encourage a deep understanding of Scripture.

The appropriate way to approach these verses is to look carefully at the whole context (1 Timothy 2:8-15). Claims about the meaning of verses 11-12 should grow out of a clear understanding of their logical place in the flow of the argument.

Below are some questions for consideration. Some may seem easy, some difficult, and some will unravel unpredictably if you pull at them. Spend some time wrestling with each one until you begin to see the whole passage more clearly. If you can understand the logic of the argument, you'll be in a better position to explain what verses 11-12 mean and how they should be applied in our context.

1. (2:8) Why should men lift their hands when they pray? Should women do this too? Would it be okay if men prayed without raising their hands?
2. (2:9) This question may be hard to follow unless you can read Greek. But try it anyway. Here is a literal translation of 2:8-10:  
  
8 Therefore I want  
    A. the men in every place to pray, lifting holy hands without anger or argument;  
9      B. likewise also the women [ \_\_\_\_ to ??? \_\_\_\_ ] in orderly apparel with modesty[;]  
    [C.] and with prudence to adorn themselves,  
        1. not with braids and gold or pearls or expensive clothes,  
10       2. but, what is fitting for women who profess religion, with good deeds.

Now the question is, what goes in the blank in part B? The context suggests two possibilities, either "to pray" or "to adorn themselves." Does Paul give two directives to women (how to pray and how to adorn themselves) or does he give only one directive to women (how to adorn themselves), which he elaborates at length?

3. (2:9) What is wrong with braids, gold, pearls, and fancy clothes? What makes clothing "fancy" anyway?
4. (2:12) The Greek word translated "quietness" is *hesychia* (pronounced hay-soo-KHEE-a). Look up the following verses where this word appears, and read each one in its context. What does the word mean? 1 Tim 2:2; 2 Thes 3:12; Acts 22:2. What about the verb "be quiet" (*hesychazein*) in Acts 11:18; 21:14?

5. (2:12) What does it mean to “domineer”? If a forty-year-old woman teaches a high school Bible class, over whom is she domineering?
6. (2:12) Are “teach” and “domineer” two different things, or are they two expressions of the same idea? If they are the same, then is there some teaching that does not domineer? If they are different, then what does it mean to “domineer” apart from teaching?
7. (2:12) Would Paul permit a man to “domineer”?
8. (2:12) The Greek word *aner* (pronounced ah-NAYR) means either “adult male” or “husband.” Which does it mean in this context? Is every woman forbidden to teach every adult male (at what age is a male an “adult?”), or only her husband? What if she meets (or marries) a man who cannot read?
9. (2:14) “Eve fell into transgression.” Did Adam fall into transgression?
10. (2:14) If Adam was not deceived, how can Paul argue that he was the first sinner and a type of Christ in Romans 5:12-21?
11. (2:14) If Adam was not deceived, did he sin knowingly? Which do you think is worse—to be tricked into sinning or to sin knowingly?
12. (2:15) Verse 15 says, literally, “But she will be saved through childbearing.” Who is “she” in this verse?
13. (2:15) In what sense can childbearing “save” any woman? If a woman does not bear any children, can she be saved?
14. (2:15) Verse 15 says, literally, “if they continue in faith and love and holiness with temperance.” Who is “they” in this verse?
15. (2:13-15) Verses 13-15 provide the reason why “I do not permit a woman to teach or domineer over a man/her husband” (2:12). From these verses, can you explain *why*?

If the answers to these questions are not clear to you, that’s okay. Believers have been wrestling with them for almost 2000 years. One could spend years studying them and still not have all the answers. If some of the logic is vague to you, then you should be charitable toward other believers who understand and apply this passage differently.

For a discussion of the passage to help you start thinking about these questions, see part 3 of this study: “Women Who Profess Religion.”