

# Wednesdays at West Side West Side Church

**Culture:**

**Its Creation, Fall and Redemption**

***A Case Study on Gender***

***Session # 5 – Correcting Fallen Culture***

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# This Series - Review

## Culture: A Case Study on Gender

- Session # 1: The Creation of Culture
  - God's Creation Intent: Equality/mutuality of the sexes
- Session # 2: The Fall of Culture
  - The curse on the ground: Scarcity & Patriarchy
- Session # 3: Jesus Shapes a New Culture
  - His impact on men, women, & their relationship
- Session # 4: The Counter-Cultural Church
  - Implementing the vision of Jesus & the Spirit
- Session # 5: Today!

# Our Approach - Review

- The Strategy (Sessions 3 & 4):
  - Identify all relevant N.T. passages on gender
  - Record on note cards
  - Interpret according to the context & culture
  - Sort and re-sort – and look for patterns
- The Criteria:
  - All relevant Scripture texts addressing gender
    - Acts 20:27 – “The Whole Counsel of God”
    - 1 Tim. 3:16-17 – “All Scripture is God-breathed and useful . . . .”
  - Each text is considered and allowed to “speak”
  - Approach the New Testament as an historical document
  - The results reinforce each other historically & logically

# The Pattern with All Scripture

- Descriptive Texts
  - Women in ministry or leadership activities - often in counter-cultural ways - are simply described
    - Without qualification or defense
    - Indicates these activities were common and accepted
  - Not “WWJD” but WDWD? “What **Did** Women Do?”
  - This category formed (roughly) one-half of the cards
- A Significant Discovery – especially compared to the typical emphasis in the church through history as well as today
- Therefore the primary criterion for further sorting

# The Pattern with All Scripture

- Instructive Texts

- How did the “Descriptive” activities come about?
- A patriarchal culture; women’s roles focus on the “home sphere,” men’s in the “public sphere”
- Identify texts that would have encouraged women

- These texts “instruct”

- Encouragement for women to act in these ways
- Encouragement for men to support & welcome

# The Pattern with All Scripture

- Corrective Texts
  - Texts that would have discouraged women
  - Only two of them! (1 Tim. 2 & 1 Cor. 14)
- Justification for “Corrective” Category
  - Context: Addressing problems in one situation
  - A sharp contrast with the other two groups of texts
    - If made primary, they cannot explain the behavior, activities & values found in the other two groups
  - The Descriptive & Instructive explain the Corrective
    - New freedom and opportunity sometimes leads to problems
- Together these three categories provide a complete picture of gender life in the New Testament Church

# Descriptive & Instructive

## What Have We Seen So Far?

- **Descriptive – What did women do?**
  - Praying, prophesying, teaching
  - Titles such as Deacon, Benefactor/Patron and Apostle
  - Co-laborers with Paul, recognized publicly like men
- **Instructive – What encouraged women & men?**
  - Practical equality in marriage; singleness affirmed as valid
  - Spiritual gifts given to all without reference to gender
  - Equal status in Christ of all had practical/social implications
- **Together reinforce what we saw in the Gospels:**
  - A consistent counter-cultural effort
  - Men challenged regarding how they used power
  - Women given new opportunities and roles

## Corrective Text – 1 Cor. 14:34-35

“... The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.” (ESV)

- How should we understand this?
- Quite different from what we saw elsewhere
  - Both in Jesus and Paul himself!



# 1 Cor. 14:34-35 - Context

- Immediate Context: Disruptions in the church service – overriding concern is order “*that the church may be edified*”
  - Women are the third group Paul asks to be silent (after prophets & tongues-speakers) and the same issue
  - *Disorder* is everyone talking at once
- Broader context of ch. 12-14: Spiritual gifts for the common good
  - Ch. 11 – some women are praying & prophesying
- The bigger church context: Meetings in private homes with “service” and public/meeting areas segregated
- The bigger social context: The behavior of women in a semi-segregated culture (“dual sub-cultures” – combined?)
- Education/Socialization: Formal for men, home – for women – with focus on domestic matters

# Women in a Semi-Segregated Culture

- Women typically educated at home, with no formal education
  - Difficulties with attention span and group behavior
    - More significant for lower-class women
      - A greater degree of arrested development and learning disabilities due to malnutrition, sexual abuse, and a general lack of mental stimulation (Westfall, *Paul & Gender*)
  - Still an issue in our world
    - Kenneth E. Bailey: Egyptian women with 15-second attention spans; chatting, interrupting (*Jesus Through Middle-Eastern Eyes*)
    - Cynthia Long Westfield: Experience teaching in the inner-city
      - Problems due to a lack of socialization in a group-learning context, and the problem of an individual's limited knowledge or the capacity to learn in a group." (Paul & Gender)
- Many Africans have actually seen this

# Understanding 1 Cor. 14:34-35

Possible Understandings (there is evidence for each):

- A. Later manuscript insertion
- B. Statement by the Corinthians which Paul dismisses (+v.36)
- C. Inter-related social/cultural issues:
  1. Chatting by the women – seeking understanding
  2. Inappropriate interruption of speakers
  3. Wives embarrassing/shaming their husbands
- Addressing disorder: Be quiet, focus on learning, supplement with teaching in the home
- Points us toward a better hermeneutical principle
  - Judgment (women as the problem) & restriction
  - Or understanding, compassion, & redemptive action

## Corrective Text – 1 Tim. 2:11-15

“Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” (ESV)

# 1 Tim. 2:11-15 – Basic Concerns

- Primary text used to restrict women
- Classification as Corrective:
  - Contrary to all Descriptive & Instructive Texts
  - Addressing immediate context – the specific & unusual situation of the Ephesian church
- Rom. 12: Spiritual gifts – the body of Christ
  - Reference 1 Tim. 2:12 – “Different roles for women”?
  - Romans – ca. 58 AD while 1 Timothy ca. 64 AD
  - How would the Roman Church have made this connection or seen this restriction?

# 1 Tim. 2:11-15 - Context

- Why Paul left Timothy in Ephesus
- Context: Similar social situation as Corinth, plus false doctrine - 1 Tim. 1:3-4
  - To command others to not teach false doctrines
  - or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies
  - Term “Pastoral Epistles” gives impression of standard instruction for all churches – but is not consistent with the context
- Acts 19 – Paul’s two-plus year ministry in Ephesus
  - Vss. 13-16 Demonic activity
  - Vss. 18-19 Practice of magic
  - Vss. 23-41 Center of worship of goddess Artemis (spiritual & economic conflict provoked a riot)
- Evidence of what we would call “syncretism”

# Understanding 1 Tim. 2:11-15

## A. Helps with our understanding of vs. 15

- A verse that CANNOT be taken literally at face value!
  - Yet same context as vs. 12
- “Women will be saved through childbearing”

## B. Syncretism from worship of goddess Artemis

### – Goddess of childbirth

- Life-threatening, complications from childbirth a major cause of death for women

### – One approach to vs. 15 – “. . . saved through childbearing”

## C. Influence of an early form of Gnosticism

### – 1 Tim. 4:3 – “some will forbid people to marry”

### – Dangers of pregnancy plus sexual activity a hazard to spirituality

### – Insight to vs. 15, “passing safely *through*” childbirth (compare Greek preposition to 1 Cor. 3:15 “saved as *through* fire”)

# Understanding 1 Tim. 2:11-15

“Adam was formed first, then Eve”

- “Transcendent Norm” – thus must be universal?
  - Used to argue this restriction as universal
  - Yet - 1 Cor. 11:3-16 – Paul used creation to support a cultural application (women’s veiling)
    - “. . . Man not created for woman, but woman for man”
- Addresses either/both Artemis worship & Gnosticism
  - Artemis born before her twin Apollo & helped deliver him
  - Some “Proto-Gnostics”: Eve created first, then brought Adam enlightenment
    - “No, the woman was the one deceived” – vs. 14
- Paul’s appeal to Genesis 2 & 3 refutes both



# Understanding 1 Tim. 2:11-15

- “Authority” – an unusual word in verse 12
  - Paul regarding the false teachers/apostles in Corinth who were dominating the Corinthian church:
    - “The authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.” – 2 Cor. 10:8 & 13:10 – Greek “Exousia”
  - Paul to the women in Ephesus who were . . . .
    - “I am not permitting a woman to teach / have authority over a man”
    - 1 Tim. 2:12 – Greek “Authentein” – only occurrence in the N.T.
    - Strong evidence for a meaning of “domineer”
- Vss. 8-9 are consistent with “domineer”
  - Male & female status hierarchies
  - Women/wives using false teachings to dominate men/husbands
- How “women not to authentein” restrict them from exousia?
- Men are not therefore to dominate women!
  - A restriction on women is not a mandate for men!

# Understanding 1 Tim. 2:11-15

- Key Greek words have dual meanings:
  - Woman/wife and Man/husband
- 2:11-15 - In the home, not the church assembly?
  - Church assembly usually assumed but not demonstrated
    - Instructions to men & parallel to women in 8-10 are “everywhere”
  - Change from plural to singular (“men and women” to woman and man) in 2:11
  - Issue of pregnancy & childbirth in 2:15
  - Reference to Adam and Eve in 2:13-14
  - Similar pattern to 1 Cor. 14:34-35
- Addressing syncretism among women: Be quiet, focus on learning, don't dominate husband, rely on his teaching in the home, trust Christ in pregnancy

# The “Acid Test”: Application

- “Traditionalist” interpreters must add caveats
  - Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church*, P. 210f
    - Are women to receive instruction without questions or spiritual discernment? (“learn in quietness & full submission” – Vs. 11)
    - Authority as “impersonal & indirect” vs. “personal and direct”
- Literal interpretation lends itself to casuistry
  - Alan Johnson, Prof Emeritus of Ethics – Wheaton College (conversation)
    - “Prophecy” vs. “Teaching”
    - “Shepherding”/spiritual authority vs. administrative authority
    - At what age is it no longer appropriate for women to teach males?
    - Man “generic” except 1 Tim 2:12 when not generic
    - Some positions OK for women if “under male authority”
- The point: The application of literal interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:12 is not consistent among churches
  - Women can find themselves blindsided

# The “Traditionalists” Strike Back!

- The “Woman’s Desire” for her husband: A New Expression of the Traditional View:
  - ESV: “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”
  - NLT (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.): “And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you” (footnote in 1<sup>st</sup> Ed.)
- Origin: N.T. Scholar – Susan Foh on Gen. 3:16 proposed this interpretation in the mid-1970s
  - “Your desire will be to dominate your husband, but he will rule over you.”
  - Based on comparison with Gen. 4:7
    - God to Cain: “Sin is crouching at your door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”
    - “Desire” must be a desire to dominate
  - Commands in the N.T. for women/wives to submit/not have authority are seen as supporting this interpretation
    - Addressing a sinful tendency of women/wives

# Implications of the Alternate View

- Sin:
  - The woman's sin is often understood as against her husband & his headship – not God
  - A strong tendency, even a character defect of women
- Redemption:
  - “Consequently a man must actively seek to rule his wife” – Foh's own conclusion - “What is the Woman's Desire,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 37 (1974/75)
  - Male authority as corrective action over women
  - Men encouraged to dominance, suspicion & hostility toward women – element of a threat from them
  - Women encouraged to minimize their own initiative
  - Would tend to keep women/wives in a very vulnerable position
  - Implications in Africa, where there is often a value for men to beat their wives to reinforce their control
  - Tie to 1 Tim. 2:12 – Women to not have “authority” over a man

# Cross Examination

- Metaphor in Gen. 4:7 is of a wild beast crouching – its desire is to consume or devour
  - The issue is appetite, not authority
- Same word used in Song of Sol. 7:10 of the groom's desire for his bride in a positive way
  - The bride: "I belong to my beloved, and his *desire* is for me."
- Actually a judgment on the man (does not fit the pattern in the context)
- How did God do this – accomplish this "judgment"?
- Not consistent with history – women's desire & men's rule
- Jesus challenges men – never women – regarding their use of authority/power
- Seems aimed at today's world of greater power for women
  - Does this threaten men? Men having "lost" something?
- Do women ever experience redemption from this judgment?

# Elders as Men *and* Women

1 Tim. 3:7 & Titus 1:5-9 state the requirements

- “Blameless” precedes “one-woman man”
  - This & all other criteria are issues of character & capability
- “One Woman Man” (literal translation) is like “mailman” – would not exclude “mailwoman”
  - Certain generic terms typically stated in the masculine
  - Excludes polygamous men, men with “courtesans,” & adulterers (men and women)
  - Does not exclude single people – and no reason it would exclude women
  - Isolating “man” from “one woman man” does not create a new requirement
- No masculine pronouns in the original Greek
  - E.g., “**Anyone**” who desires to be an overseer/elder . . . .

# Issues with Mandate for “Male Leadership”

- Feminine images of leadership used in the N.T.
  - By Jesus: Luke 22:27 – serving at the table
  - By Paul: 1 Thess. 2:7-8 – like a nursing mother
- True leadership embraces servanthood and placing oneself last
- Legitimate authority comes from the power of the Holy Spirit
- God’s power is manifested in personal weakness, not in one gender
- The only criteria for distribution of the gifts:
  - as “God has placed,” (1 Cor. 12:28)
  - as “Christ gives” (Eph. 4:11)
  - as “the Spirit wills,” (1 Cor. 12:7)



# Issues with Mandate for “Male Leadership”

- What if a woman has the actual leadership gifting
  - but a man leads?
    - The woman may become disheartened; the Spirit (& her spirit) grieved, or even quenched (which may appear as “submission”)
    - The man may become a “figurehead” or a “hireling”
    - The woman may challenge a system that she sees as dishonest (which may appear as “rebellion”)
    - The entire situation may take on the character of pretense
    - In seeking to save masculinity we may lose it (see Mark 8:35)

# The “Pattern” that has Emerged

All Scripture, in context, in categories that explain & support the others:

- Descriptive: The Instructive texts are being lived out
  - Clear & fairly uncontested context & meaning
- Instructive: The values of Jesus Christ & the Apostle Paul that influenced the early church
  - Substantial agreement between Gospels, Acts & Paul’s letters - Paul continues what Jesus began
- Corrective: Reinforce the Descriptive – explain why problems arose in specific circumstances
  - Point them toward resolution & redemption
  - Concerns regarding the claim to “biblical authority” when you use just a few texts & ignore many

# The Lessons of this “Pattern”

The Descriptive / Instructive / Corrective pattern of Scripture regarding women and men in ministry:

- Shows us a strong redemptive movement already underway
- Honors the “Whole counsel of God” – “All Scripture is God-breathed”
- In a very hierarchal society, both Jesus and Paul address the top of the hierarchy much more than the bottom
  - Corrective texts for men outnumber those for women!
- In a very patriarchal culture, both Jesus and Paul create and affirm counter-cultural activities for women
- Problems arose – as one would expect – that are met with corrective action
- Overall, the Biblical material is headed toward an elevation of women in status and rights while reducing patriarchal power of men
  - To simply “stop” at the end of the N.T. era is to be completely unrealistic regarding the amount of change that could occur in one generation

# Concerns Regarding the Alternative

- When the “Corrective” becomes “Instructive”
  - Only a few passages are allowed to speak
  - Most of Scripture on women & men is ignored
  - Properly understood, however, they point us in a redemptive direction
- If 1 Cor. 14:34-35 & 1 Tim. 2:11-15 are at the core of our understanding:
  - No meaningful framework for all Scripture
  - Problem: Not that women are silent but that most Biblical passages that speak to this issue are silenced!

# A Practical Example

A woman today:

- Christian upbringing, good education, godly character – great example of “Descriptive” and the kind of mature female disciple the “Instructive” passages encourage
- With priority of 1 Tim. 2:11-15, however  
She can never escape restrictions of – or suspicion toward – women resulting from misinterpretations of this text  
Is female a “non-redeemable” condition?
- The priority of Descriptive & Instructive texts, along with an understanding of the purpose of the Corrective texts, encourages & empowers her leadership
- A powerful example of the “Whole Counsel of God” approach to Scripture.

# We Need to Move Toward a Better Application

Cynthia Long Westfall (*Paul and Gender*), (p. 314-315)

- “For the Christian population, there must be a determined evaluation of the behavioral outcomes of any belief system: Jesus said that we will know people by their fruit.
- “The mandate to subordinate women and bar them from positions of authority has been applied in the congregation and the academy, in some cases with various forms and degrees of disrespect, marginalization, suspicion, mistreatment, and rejection of women, usually in an effort to either maintain control, enforce a standard, or deflect responsibility.

# We Need to Move Toward a Better Application

Cynthia Long Westfall (*Paul and Gender*), Cont'd

- “The prerogative of male leaders and husbands is felt to be such a scriptural priority that there is a lack of accountability and confrontation in cases of abuse, sexual harassment, and incest in the churches. Not surprisingly, there is not enough interest in addressing the global oppression of women.
- “The exercise of power among male leaders is also problematic as influential leaders use their public or institutional influence to inappropriately dominate and enforce doctrinal uniformity over their colleagues.

# We Need to Move Toward a Better Application

Cynthia Long Westfall (*Paul and Gender*), Cont'd

- “Identifiable propaganda techniques and the employment of blatant power plays have been used to ruin careers. There is a transparent connection between these behaviors and the theology of power in which this behavior is systemic.”
- Countless women prevented from using their gifts to build up the body of Christ – affects them and the church
- “. . . A social construction of . . . power and control. . . .” (p. 4)
- Society has built this; God did not build this!
- So, what kind of society – of Christian community – does God want us to build?