



Leadership Principles Why The Difference?

by Chuck Gianotti

Studies in 1 Timothy—Part 6

In 1 Timothy 2:13-15, Paul supports his teaching of verse 12, namely a gender distinction in the teaching and leading roles in the church. The command of Scripture by itself should be sufficient for us; however, the Lord graciously provides a rationale to engage our minds as we follow His instructions. The gender role distinction is explained along two lines of reasoning:

The order of creation

For Adam was formed first, then Eve (2:13 NASB).

Because of the sequence in creation, men should take the lead in teaching, rather than women. One could either argue one's own interpretation of Genesis, or accept the apostle's inspired interpretation. We choose the later, because Paul's interpretation is infallible. Further, his use of Genesis roots this teaching *outside* of the 1st century culture—by basing it on an historical event that *precedes* all of Christianity.

The role of deception

And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner (2:14).

Adam sinned with his eyes wide open, so to speak. He was not deceived. Eve, on the other, *was* deceived (Genesis 2:15). How does this affect things in the church today? Eve was led astray, in a very real sense, by false doctrine (Gen 3:4-5), for indeed, the serpent had subtly twisted God's good command and misrepresented the truth. Blindly, she fell for the deception and then chose to *lead* her husband to follow along with her. Some object to characterizing Eve's actions as a form of leadership, but notice that when Adam responded to God's interrogation, he made it clear that Eve had influenced him toward sin ("*The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate*" Gen 3:12). The dictionary defines *leading* as "to be first, to guide on a way especially by going in advance, to direct a course of action." Certainly, Eve's actions fulfill this definition.

Somehow, Adam's and Eve's actions carry consequences down to the present day—men and women today are affected differently because of Adam's and Eve's different roles. Was it a propensity to be

deceived that Eve passed down to all women? Or was it a seminal activity, in that all women were "in" Eve when she was deceived, so all women therefore suffer the same consequence with Eve? Theologians debate the merits of these views. Either way, the application is the same, for Paul applies it to all women.

We would surmise from Paul's reasoning that it is better to have a teacher of the congregation who is *less likely* to be deceived into teaching wrong doctrine, than one who is *more likely* to be deceived. Both men and women certainly have the capacity to either knowingly or mistakenly teach wrong doctrine. But a propensity for deception adds an additional layer of concern when it comes to teaching. When it comes to teaching God's

Word, deception is foundational to conveying false doctrine. Just as in the Garden of Eden, so also in

The words in 1 Timothy 2 are not unfriendly words for women.

the wilderness temptation of Jesus, Satan twists God's Word to lead to false conclusions. When it comes to the church, the enemy has not changed his methods. And his easiest entry point is to gain access to the body of Christ through the weakest point. The direct application Paul makes is that since Adam was created first, since Eve was deceived, and since she influenced Adam to sin (in effect, promoting false doctrine), therefore, in the church of God, women today are not to teach or lead over men.

Leading and teaching in the church.

How and when does this apply in the church today? The simplest answer is to ask the question: "Does a particular activity involve a woman teaching men or having authority over them?" This, of course, leaves much room for women in teaching, leadership and pastoring roles involving women and children. Also, since our passage deals with activities within the "household of God" (which we take to mean the local church), this does not contradict the biblical example of Priscilla (a woman) and Aquila team teaching Apollos (a man) in a private setting (Acts 18:26).

Does this always apply?

In the normal operation of a church, men should be the leaders and teachers of the congregation. This is the goal, without question. However, even Jesus taught that at

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Biblical Foundations

The Authority of Elders

by Jack Spender

Two words with similar meanings in the New Testament are power and authority. Power is the strength or ability to act; authority is the right to act. When applied to God, the words are nearly synonymous, since God is both the ultimate power and the final authority in the universe. However, when used of men, it is different. One can have power to act, but no authority, or one can have the right or authority to do something, but lack the power. In general, bad men dislike authority but crave power.

These two words are important in the Scriptures. Examples of well known verses using them can be seen in the following literal translations: Matthew 28:18 spoken by the Lord Jesus after His resurrection: “All *authority* has been given unto me in heaven and on earth...”; John 1:12 in reference to His followers: “To as many as received Him, to them He gave *authority* to become the children of God...”; and as a promise to His disciples in Acts 1:8 “But ye shall receive *power* after the Holy Spirit comes upon you.”

With all of the different “authorities” in the world, it is an important question as to what authority should govern the Christian and the Christian church. According to Romans 13, God is the supreme authority; all human authority is derived from Him, and is therefore delegated authority. Human government, society, commerce and the family all depend on the right use of authority. It is no different in the church. To provide leadership and preserve order, God has established an authority structure for the church. This is a broad subject, and for this article, we want to inquire specifically about the authority of the leaders i.e., the elders of the church. What kind is it? How does it work out in practical living? How can it affect the peace and harmony of the fellowship?

Jesus and Authority

First, we should remind ourselves of how the Lord Jesus related to the authorities of His day and in His life. Luke 2:51 tells us that as a child, He was subject to His parents. During His years of ministry, He spoke and acted as a Son under the authority of His Father (John

14:10 KJV). The common people realized that He taught them as one having authority (Matt. 7:29). On trial before kings and rulers, He made it clear that His kingdom was not competing against theirs in this world (John 18:36), and that they could have no authority against Him unless it was given to them by His Father (John 19:11). His followers were to live in submission to earthly governments so far as possible (Luke 20:25; I Peter 2:13), yet carry on His work with the conviction that He is the true King of kings and Lord of lords, and His word is the believer’s final authority.

Those who take leadership, however, should work by a very different principle than followed in the world. The Lord said, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant...” (Matthew 20:25-26). And so, for example, the Master washed the feet of His own disciples before He died (John 13).

Elders of the Church

Such thoughts provide a fitting background for church leaders today. Elders, as God’s authorities in spiritual things have no civil power in the church. They are *not* placed in their position by the popular vote of the people, but by the sovereign act of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). As they serve, the people of the congregation are admonished to know (or recognize) them because of the work they are doing (I Thessalonians 5:12) and submit to them (Hebrews 13:17). This voluntary submission of believers will be blessed by God as He upholds the authority of those He has given to the churches. Many verses exhort believers to submit to those in authority just as they would to the Lord. In the world, submission is sometimes viewed as a bad word; in the church, it is a mark of devotion to Christ.

Elders, then, will always be working to maintain a godly balance in their dealings in the church. They must not be over bearing (lording it over God’s heritage, I Peter 5:3), nor too weak, standing by while evil men or false teachers harm the church.

The Practical Outworking

How will all of this work out in relationships within the church? A Spirit-filled elder will live and serve with the conviction that the Lord will uphold him at all times. He needs no intervention from civil authorities to shepherd the church. In fact, the Lord provided no court of appeals in spiritual matters beyond the local church (Matt. 18:15-17). The elder cannot be timid or fearful. For him gentleness and boldness are not opposites. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the Lord Jesus often spoke strong words to groups, but was tender with individuals. Sometimes we do things in reverse. Our Lord stood up in anger when His Father’s interest was compromised, but turned the other cheek when attacked personally. Again, we sometimes do the opposite.

All of this becomes clearer when we understand one of the fruits of the Spirit: meekness (Galatians 5:23), which some have mistakenly viewed as a synonym for weakness. It actually refers to great moral strength held in control. This principle is brought out in two important verses: II Corinthians 10:8 and 13:10. Paul states that the authority God had given him was for the edification (building up) of the believers, not for their destruction or for his own benefit. By so much, it is acknowledged that a misuse of authority can harm the church.

Domineering elders can do great damage. People are controlled by fear. In severe cases, the result is a cult. As a safe guard, church eldership is always a plurality, a team effort. It took time and team work for the apostles and elders to write to the young churches concerning a difficult matter: “It seemed good to us, having come to one accord...”, and then: “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...(Acts 15:25, 28).

In the primary passage on the qualifications of elders (I Tim. 3:1-7), words like “temperate,” “sober-minded,” and “not violent” describe them as mature men of the congregation, not exalted above, but laboring among the people.

There is something refreshing about a local church that becomes known for the grace and kindness of its leaders. Order is maintained, necessary disciplines are car-

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Managing Conflict

by Ruth Spender

Conflict - an unavoidable fact of life! We all know what it is and how it makes us feel, but how can we be assured of a positive outcome when we find ourselves involved in the middle of a conflict? Remember that nothing enters our lives unless the Lord allows it and He has promised that all things work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28 KJV). We are also told to give thanks for everything that comes into our lives—this includes conflict (Ephesians 5:20).

You may often find yourself in the midst of conflict simply because you are married to a leader who has taken a stand on an issue. Leaders often need boldness to stand up for what is right. When God's honor is at stake, we must not hesitate to stand firmly in support of our husbands.

Some people seem to welcome the challenge that conflict brings into their lives, but most of us do not like the confrontation that it involves. We may try to convince ourselves that no problem exists, with the hope that it will somehow go away. Generally, that will only cause the problem to grow bigger, and a greater wedge is created between those who are

involved. Unfortunately, many Christians choose to live with unresolved conflict. This results in a lack of joy and fruitfulness in their service for the Lord.

When we find ourselves confronted with a conflict, we may feel under attack. Our first reaction may be to lash out or blame others. We take matters into our own hands with devastating consequences. As we observe how the Lord Jesus handled conflict when He was here on earth, we realize that we need His wisdom to walk as He walked. We should not hesitate to pour out our heart and soul to Him. He can handle our honest thoughts, our resentments, hurts or bitterness. Prayer helps us to see our heart as God sees it. An important part of prayer is listening to what God the Holy Spirit wants to reveal to us. He can reveal any part that we may have had in creating the problem in which we find ourselves. He also encourages and strengthens us to do the right thing. Perhaps something we said was misunderstood or some unkind word needs to be confessed. He shows us how to speak the truth in love or where we might make some concessions to

help defuse the situation. Some conflicts run deeper than the surface issue that is first presented to us. Only with wisdom and understanding can we learn what that deeper problem may be (Prov. 20:5).

Because of the need for a great deal of patience and humility, the situation at hand can provide us an opportunity for personal spiritual growth. Hannah is an old Testament example of someone whose sorrow and hurt in conflict ran very deep. We do not know how long her agony of soul lasted, but she provides a wonderful example for us of someone who handled her conflict with Peninnah in a gracious, humble manner. Her experience was recorded for our learning in 1 Samuel 1:1-18.

Having said this, there are times when, after doing all we know to do, the conflict we have encountered is still not resolved. It is good to continue praying about the matter, but leave your case with the Lord, knowing that you have tried to do the right thing. Romans 12:18 tells that, "If it be possible, as much as lies within you, live at peace with all men." The Lord Himself (in His written Word) recognizes that in a sinful world, it may not always be possible to be at peace with everyone, but it is to be our goal. 

Leadership Principles Call to Higher Ground

God calls out to those who want a higher vision of His work among His people. They are not satisfied with either the world's standard of success or the pathetic acceptance of "church as usual." But, to attain a higher vision, means giving up our own lofty dreams, for God's greater vision— what looks startling ordinary and mundane, yet infused with God's presence.

Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it well: "He who loves his dream of community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial. ... By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world. He does not abandon us to those rapturous experiences and lofty moods that come over us like a dream. God is not a God of the emotions but the God of truth.

Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it." *Quoted in Christianity Today, July 2006, Vol. 50, No. 7, p. 36.*

This seems to fit with what the Lord said to Jeremiah: "If you return, then I will restore you— before Me you will stand; and if you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become My spokesman. They for their part may turn to you, but as for you, you must not turn to them (Jeremiah 15:19 NASB).

What other people see as worthless or banal in the church can weigh leaders down and lead to a spiritual lethargy and even apathy. Lofty dreams of the perfect fellowship mock lesser men, who easily get discouraged. Rare is the

one who can extract "the precious from the worthless," who can find the hand of God working to enliven the mundane things that so often plague church life. Such a man is a true spiritual leader, one of a higher caliber. Where others bog down, he steps forward in faith, believing God is doing a great work. He just does not give up.

Jeremiah was instructed to look only to the Lord in faith, for how else could he become God's spokesman. He was not to listen to the people and their perception of things. The pressure is great to please the crowd—who doesn't want to be liked and to have peace in the camp? And dreaming big is exciting and future oriented. But, as has been said before, "God is in the trenches." True spiritual leadership helps others see a grander view, no matter where or what the circumstances. 

Why The Difference? (cont.)

times exceptions were justified because of a higher cause. For example, He referred to David who ate the ceremonial bread even though normally only the priests were allowed to do so.

Consider also that God raised up Deborah as a judge and leader in OT Israel, though this was the very rare exception—in context, Deborah’s leadership was clearly a judgment upon the weak men in Israel. We may conclude that, likewise, there maybe rare times when it may be justified for a woman to take the lead over men. For example, a woman missionary in the absence of male missionaries might teach new male converts. Sad, though, is the church where men abdicate their responsibilities and leave the work of teaching and leading to the women. God may raise up the women to fill in the gaps as a judgment on the men of the church. Exceptions, however, do not make the rule. The godly woman would always do this with a view to seeing the men become the teachers and leaders.

Saved through childbearing

One of most difficult verses in Scripture is 1 Timothy 2:15, and is acknowledged so by almost all commentators, regardless of theological persuasion: *“But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint”* (NASB).

The word “preserved” here corresponds to the Greek word *sozto* which is often translated “saved” which

raises the question, “In what sense is a woman saved through childbearing?” Clearly, salvation for eternity would go against everything Paul taught about the gospel of grace (for example, Eph 2:8-9). However, it may also refer to being rescued from other things besides spiritual condemnation. Some interpretations have traditionally been adopted. 1) Women preserve the human race through childbearing 2) Women will be brought safely through the child-birthing process 3) Women will be saved through the birth of the Child, Jesus Christ and 4) A woman’s greatest achievement is found in devotion to her divinely ordained role, the nurturing of children being a primary aspect of this.

While some may find solace in dogmatically asserting one or another of these interpretations, the fact remains that all of them involve significant questions (see “The Cosmic Drama: Men, Women & the Church” pages 144-171 for a fuller discussion of these problems). While some who deny biblical gender distinctions appeal to the ambiguity of this verse to undermine any confidence we might have in the larger section (the whole of chapter 2), we join with Peter who recognized that, *“Paul ... also wrote ... some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort ...”* (2 Peter 3:15-16). It is never a good idea to let the less clear passages of Scripture dictate our interpretation of the more clear passages of Scripture.

Conclusion

The words in 1 Timothy are *not* unfriendly words for women. To limit women from teaching men in the church is not legalistic. God’s design is for men to take the primary leadership and teaching roles in the church. We should avoid situations in which women do that for which they are particularly unsuited. The responsibility falls to the men. Men, let’s teach and lead well!

Adapted from “The Cosmic Drama: Men, Women & the Church”, by Charles R. Gianotti. For a fuller discussion of this section along with verse 15, see pages 144-171. You can obtain a copy by writing to ESN (see address below). 

Authority (cont.)

ried out, yet the whole spirit of the work is one of life and growth. Young believers need “space” to learn the lessons of life, and they need to do it in the environment of a caring family. Where elders are true servants, they will have no need to bark out orders and issue commands; the flock will love and respect them, and want to follow their lead. And in those occasional times when their authority is spurned or rejected, having given careful attention to those Scriptures which apply (e.g. Rom.. 16:17-18, Titus 3:10-11...), they will find satisfaction as they trust the Chief Shepherd to vindicate them in the time and manner of His own choosing. But He will do it, just as He promised. 

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