

Women in leadership: a critical view at 1 Timothy 2:9-15

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Abstract

Women in leadership is an age-old debate that has been misunderstood and misrepresented. Given which side of the debate people are on, the same information has been used with different perspectives. From a statistical and secular perspective, the data shows that women have every opportunity to occupy leadership positions, however, they are currently very much the minority as it pertains to actually representing leadership. Biblically, scripture is laced with, what would appear to be, either contradictory passages or even degrading ones with regard to a woman's place in leadership. By the use of exegetical techniques, this paper attempts to provide a deeper view of women in leadership by analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, arguably the most controversial passage on this topic in the bible. From this study, it appears that Paul is more concerned about the teachings of false doctrines of the time and not setting a universal principal for all women to follow with regard to teaching.

Keywords: 1 Tim 2:9-15, exegesis, intertexture, women, leadership

In the contemporary landscape, Yukl (2010) suggests that there are many definitions and philosophies of leadership yet rarely do they present gender as a mediating characteristic. Northouse (2010) notes that regardless of this perspective, writers in the popular press have continued to show an enduring interest in the intersection of gender and leadership, suggesting that there are blatant differences between men and women as leaders. Biblically speaking, DeSilva (2004) suggests that 1 Timothy 2:8-15 contains the most objectionable words about women, specifically from a leadership point of view. Not only objectionable, but Bowman (1992) suggests that structurally the passage has an awkward use of grammar and the flow is not as fluid as at first glance which only adds to the controversy of this passage.

A statistical assessment suggests that there are stark gaps between men and women's opportunity to be leaders and the reality of women having proportionally leadership positions. Northouse (2010) reports, from various government sources, that women comprise 46.7% of the labor force, hold 50.8% of the managerial and professional positions and have earned more Bachelors degrees than men, encompassing 57.5% of all degrees earned (p. 305). In turn, only 3% of all companies in the Fortune 500 have women as their CEO, just 15.2% hold board seats in these same companies and only 16.8% are members of congress (p 305).

From a results perspective, Sen and Metzger (2010) state that recent studies revealed that out of the 500 largest companies in the United States, those whose board of directors have mostly women, out performed, in profitability and

efficiency, those who have the least percentage of women on their board. In addition, companies that had more women in executive positions provided their respective companies greater return on equity and higher total return to shareholders as compared to companies with lower women executives (Sen & Metzger, 2010). Yukl (2010) and Sen and Metzger (2010) both provide a theory for this success as of recent; women possess leadership skills, which come more naturally to them, that are more apropos for today's fast paced, global economy. A different set of childhood experiences, parent-child interactions and socialization practices that are sex-role specific, encourage values such as kindness, compassion, nurturing and sharing which are viewed as feminine values and are seen as advantages to leadership today (Yukl, 2010). Though it would appear that women do have the opportunity and the intrinsic skills to be great leaders, they still have a proportionately insignificant claim to leadership positions.

Padma (2010) proposes that though women have equal access to higher education, women's biological differences, family culture and beliefs, are limiting factors for women to successfully climb the corporate ladder as compared to their male counterparts. This statement implies that beliefs are important in climbing the corporate ladder and if that is true, then possessing Christian beliefs, for instance, may have a meditating effect in women succeeding as a leader in Corporate America.

This paper attempts to exegetically analyze a portion to scripture that is focuses directly at the stance of women in leadership, specifically 1 Tim 2:9-15, and superimpose the findings over a secular perspective of women in leadership, specifically motivational theories, which may explain the gap between the opportunities that women have for leadership and the reality that they are lagging. Arguably, 1 Tim 2:9-15 is one of the most forceful passages when it comes to discussing women's leadership (Hugenberger, 1992).

A word about exegetical study

This analysis of scripture utilized intertexture as its framework to guide the exposition. Intertexture is concerned with the relationship between the text and the author and focuses on its internal understanding of the text itself using external sources and it does so by addressing four areas (Robbins, 1996, p 96). The first area of intertexture analysis is oral-scribal intertexture. Oral-Scribal intertexture addresses the different uses of external text in the text being analyzed. More specifically, oral-scribal intertexture addresses the recitation, recontextualization and reconfiguration of external text whether captured verbally or written in the text (Robbins, 1996). The second area of intertexture analysis is cultural intertexture. Culture intertexture, in this application, is concerned with the symbolic words and the logic derived from that particular culture (Robbins, 1996). The third component of intertexture analysis is historical intertexture. Historical intertexture, similar to social intertexture, however does focus on a specific set of events in history as opposed to social norm of the time (Robbins, 1996, p 118).

The final component of intertexture analysis is social intertexture. Social intertexture addresses the information of the text as it pertains to the people of the Mediterranean (Robbins, 1996). There is an initial premise that this information is what Robbins calls ‘social reality’ and that the people from the Mediterranean would be familiar with the images that scripture would paint (Robbins, 1996). This paper is subdivided into each of these areas and will address text in this context as it provides an objective framework in which to expose the themes and subtleties of the times.

Oral-scribal intertexture

As mentioned earlier, oral-scribal intertexture analyzes the different uses of external text within the pericope in question (Robbins, 1996). In the case of 1 Tim 2:9-15, external text references were not recited, yet they were a re-establishment of known biblical doctrines revealed and re-affirmed in the context of the times at Ephesus. There are parallels between how Paul arranges 1 Tim 2:8-15 and 1 Tim 5:1-6 suggesting that these passages should be read in light of each other (Heidebrecht, 2004).

1 Timothy 2:8-3:13	1 Timothy 5:1-6:2
2:8 Men	5:1 Men
2:9-15 Women	5:2-16 Women
3:1-7 Overseers	5:17-25 Elders
3:8-13 Deacons	

In addition, Heidebrecht (2004) also suggests that taking an overall view, it also appears that there is a parallel to the overall passage between 1 Tim 1-15 and 1 Tim 5:2-16 under another theme of abstraction.

1 Timothy 2:1-15	1 Timothy 5:2-16
2:2 – godliness	5:4 – godliness
2:3 – pleasing in sight of God	5:4 – pleasing in sight of God
2:1 – supplications, prayers	5:5 – supplications, prayers
2:9 – braided hair, gold, costly attire	5:6 – self-indulgent
2:10 – good works	5:10 – good works
2:10 – profess godliness	5:12 – abandon former faith
2:11 – let a woman learn	5:13 – learn to be idlers
2:1 – quietly with all submissiveness	5:13 – idlers, gossips, busybodies
2:11 – do not permit a women to teach	5:13 – going house to house
2:14 – woman was deceived	5:15 – strayed after Satan
2:15 – saved through childbearing	5:14 – bear children

The following is a verse-by-verse analysis of the pericope to be studied.

1 Tim 2	External text reference
Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments (v. 9).	Your adornment must not be merely external, - braiding the hair and wearing gold jewelry or putting on dresses; (1 Pet 3:3)

But rather by means of good works as is proper for women making a claim to godliness (v 10).

Analysis of 1 Tim 2:9. Winter (2000) submits that around 44 AD, about the time that Paul wrote to Timothy at Ephesus, a new Roman wife emerged. Winter (2000) explains the emergence of such a phenomena because at that time the women “[...] brought to the marriage the all important dowry and could hold property in their own name. It was also possible for them to terminate the marriage, and receive back portion or all of the dowry.” This financial independence was supported with a new definition of social freedom (Winter, 2000). This renewed sense of freedom led many of these new wives to indulge in

many pleasures reserved only for men, at the time, such as promiscuous sex and immoral behaviors at parties as they distinguished themselves by their dress, a outward symbol (Winter, 2000). It is implied that Paul's concern was that women of the church were not mistaken by these women by adorning themselves in a similar fashion and reciprocally, that Timothy would be aware of such women trying to exercise their freedom in the church with no governance. Bowman (1992) suggests that Paul finishes this thought by providing the antonym, that women who profess godliness should dress and act worthy of eschatological reward.

From the analysis above, it appears that women were trying to mimic what men of the time defined as being, a man, while Paul was directing women to appear outwardly as they vowed to be inwardly. These behaviors appear to be akin to attribution theory in which people attribute behaviors either to internal issues, which are considered personal issues, or external, issues which are defined as situational issues (Yukl, 2010, p.128). Attribution theory in concert with Vroom's Expectancy theory, which submits that if one behaves a certain way, then they have an expectation that they will receive some desired outcome (Yukl, 2010). Women of the time saw their male counterparts behaving a certain way and possessing stature that they wish to have and, therefore, began to emulate their behavior and expecting to have similar outcomes.

1 Tim 2	External text reference
A woman must quietly receive	The women are to keep silent in the

instruction with entire submissiveness (v. 11). But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet (v. 12).

churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says (1 Cor 14:34).

To be sensible, pure workers, at home, kind, being subject to her own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored (Titus 2:5).

Analysis of 1 Tim 2:11-12. Hugenberg (1992) suggests that Paul's exhortations for women to be silent and not teach men implies a context, within a church setting, and does not branch out to other areas such as cooking or teaching men differential equations; embellishment to make a point. Hugenberg (1992) also contends that when Paul makes his exhortation, in the context of public worship, that it implies that teaching may occur in a private setting similar to other instances in the bible where women taught men. It was Abigail who taught David (1 Sam 25), the wise woman of Tekoa who taught David (2 Sam 14:1-20), the wise woman of Abel Beth Maacah who taught Joab (20:16-22), Anna who instructed all those "who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38), or Priscilla who with her husband Aquila took Apollos aside and "expounded to him the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:26)" (Hugenberg, 1992).

Hugenberg (1992) suggests that perhaps it was Paul's intention to prohibit women to have authority in the *church*, of any kind, and did so in 1 Tim 2:12 since 1 Tim 3 addresses the formal leadership structure of the church and would avoid having to discuss the difference between having authority over men

and teaching men. Hugenberger (1992) contends that the reverse is also true, Paul does not prohibit women to the political or social authority over men since that is outside of the scope of this passage. Lastly, Merkle (2006) submits that perhaps women are less educated than men and that one (man or woman) must be educated to ensure that the message is clearly and accurately delivered.

From a contemporary leadership perspective, it appears that women were seeking power, achievement and affiliation, which is inline with McClelland’s Learned Need Theory, which defines needs as people are shaped over time by occurrences and at any given time, one of these affects individual more powerfully than others (Yukl, 2010). There is a struggle between women wanting to seek power as its defined by their male counterparts, while Paul is exhorting them to relinquish those behaviors that they believe will give them the power they desire.

1 Tim 2	External text reference
For it was Adam who was first created and then Eve (v. 13). And it was not Adam, who was deceived but the woman being deceived; fell into transgression (v 14).	Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being (Gen 2:7).
	The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. (Gen 2:22).
	To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiple your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” (Gen 3:16).
	For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man (1 Cor 11:8).

Analysis of 1 Tim 2:13-14.

Merkle (2006) submits that perhaps there might be a contradiction in Paul's teaching when comparing this passage with the passage found in 1 Cor 11. In essence, Merkle (2006) raises the issue that in both 1 Tim 2:13-14 and in 1 Cor 8-9, Paul utilizes the same creationism argument to bolster both sides of the debate. In 1 Tim 2:13-14, Paul states, paraphrased, that woman should not have authority over man since woman came from man, while in 1 Cor 11:8-9, Paul underlines the interdependence that man has with woman and vice versa. In addition, 1 Cor 11:10-11, Paul states that "Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels, However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man nor is man independent of woman". Merkle (2006) suggests that perhaps since Eve was deceived because she was less knowledgeable about the deception, since she did not get the edict directly from God, as Adam did, then there might be a parallel for women in being less educated than man.

This passage appears to be a classic struggle between perceptions of inadequacy verses an exhortation of position. It is Paul's intention to have women fulfill God's design for them, and instead the message is distorted as to have women believe that Paul is implying that they are not adequate to have authority over man. Littlejohn and Foss (2011) call this structuration theory, which states that as well intended our actions maybe currently, there are times that there are unintended consequences in the future.

1 Tim 2	External text reference
But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint (v 15).	And the grace of our Lord was more than abundant with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus (1 Tim 1:14).

Analysis of 1 Tim 2:15. Kimberley (1992) submits that with the changing roles of women and men in today's society, 1 Tim 2:15 is one of the more difficult passages to interpret as it is laced with blatant chauvinism and, therefore, receives high marks for interpretation difficulty. Much of Kimberley's (1992) analysis resides in the fact that Paul was combating erroneous gnostic teachings in Ephesus implying that childbearing was evidence for conviction of Christian women. Ryrie (1995) submits that childbearing is a woman's greatest achievement in the devotion of her divinely appointed role, which is to help her husband bear children, and to follow a faithful way of life, in essence, women are to glorify God by obeying His authority.

Perhaps this passage alludes to a combination of structuration theory and cognitive dissonance where cognitive dissonance is a misalignment of behaviors or beliefs which leads to changing one of the conflicting actions (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p.95). Paul is well intended in his exhortation of women to be pleased to comply with God's desires for their future, however, women have the perception that childbearing, though a beautiful event, is painful to endure.

Historical Intertexture

Historical intertexture focuses on a specific set of events in history as opposed to social norm of the time (Robbins, 1996, p 118). To understand the

historical events of the time is to clarify that the two letters to Timothy and one to Titus from Paul are known as the “Pastoral Epistles” because they address the ideologies of pastoral care of churches and the qualifications required by the leadership in the church (Ryrie, 1995). More specifically, Timothy had pastoral responsibilities over the church at Ephesus and Paul was concerned, since there were rumors, of false doctrine being taught at Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3-4). It was Paul’s intention to visit Timothy’s mission in Ephesus, but was detained and never made it there, as 2 Tim suggests as it’s a personal letter from Paul to Timothy preparing him for his mission prior to Paul’s impending death (DeSilva, 2004).

Cultural intertexture

Culture intertexture analyzes the context of the text with regard to the symbolic words and the logic derived from that particular culture (Robbins, 1996). Scholer (1990) reminds us that the notion of females being submissive and inferior to males was a cultural aspect of Greco Roman society and not specific to the bible and, therefore, 1 Tim 2:11-12 should not be read as a universal principle, but one that was in the context of the time and place. This ideology is also confirmed by Baugh (1994) as Paul was only addressing the Ephesian situation since there was a feminist religious culture where women had assumed religious authority over men and, therefore, it was Paul's real purpose to prevent Ephesian women from teaching men. Paul was forbidding women from teaching a particular gnostic concept concerning Eve (Baugh, 1994). From these teachings, they concluded, in

light of this scenario, that women should be ordained to pastoral ministry (Baugh, 1994).

During this time in history, women were not as educated as men were at the time, and it was understood that to preach the Gospel, one must have command of the scriptures which was synonymous with being educated. Tkacz (2008) notes that both men and women were considered to have equal discernment in morality between what is good and evil as implied in Genesis (p. 246). It is curious that Paul appears not to exclude women from ever teaching since in Titus, Paul encourages that older women are to teach the younger (Titus 2:3-4). This statement could imply that Paul understands that over a period of time, women will gain knowledge as well as experience to be able to impart these to the younger generations. Ryrie (1995) continues by stating that Paul does consider the difference between teaching and leading, though this appears at the time Paul was more concerned about the trend of the time, teaching false doctrine.

DeSilva (2004) points out that there is much in the scripture to support Paul's reasoning on the position of women in the church, the fact still remains that there are many that profess otherwise like Pippin whose states that:

“For two thousand years, the dominant agenda in Christianity has been keeping women submissive to men (and out of priesthood), arguing that homosexuality is a sin, supporting the physical discipline of children, accepting the death penalty, legitimizing warfare and Christian participation in it and anticipating a violent end of the world (p. 760).”

It is statements like these that fuel the fire in the secular world between men and women in leadership positions, however, as of recent, women are becoming more sought after in leadership positions because they possess natural skills now required in leading, such as high emotional intelligence (Porterfield & Kleiner, 2005). Curious enough, though not similar in words, Paul does advocate a similar view of a leader's nature in Galatians 5:22-26:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other”

From a secular world, these attributes lend themselves more naturally to women than to men and, therefore, it appears that these skills will be better suited now for leadership (Yukl, 2010) and confirms that Paul was not advocating inferiority for women everywhere, but more concerned with the themes ongoing in Ephesus.

Social intertexture

Social intertexture has an initial premise that information found or implied in the text is a reality to the people from the Mediterranean and the people of that time would be familiar with the illustrations that scripture would utilize. A common place to start this analysis is often in the book of Acts as it's a historical and societal account of the times in the first century church (Ryrie, 1995). Baugh (1994), as studied from the book of Acts submits that Ephesus was mainly a

Hellenistic society as it pertained to the role of a woman in the home and elsewhere as an example there is no “[...] direct evidence that women taught in any official or public capacity at Ephesus”. In addition, the evidence in the book of Acts suggests that men took the lead in economic, civil, and religious affairs at Ephesus, as no Ephesian women were mentioned in these connections (Baugh, 1994).

Women of this time in Ephesus were undergoing a renaissance of their own as they many were wealthy and expanding on their social freedoms (Bowman, 1992). Paul’s concern for the church, specifically for the woman or the church at Ephesus, was twofold. First, the women, through dressing in an ostentatiously fashion outside of the church, Paul found it inappropriate for God’s church and secondly, and most likely scenario, the women desired to either symbolize their socio-economic stature and others who may not have a similar stature, wanted to appear as they did, which may have been a barrier to witnessing to others outside the church (Bowman, 1992).

DeSilva (2004) provides two distinct and differing points of view as it pertains to feminist criticism of the time. First, DeSilva (2004) states that basic to feminist criticism is a rejection of patriarch – an ideology in which men and their goals are honored and sanctioned and suggests that perhaps 1 Tim 2:8-15 was some kind of acquiescence to current public opinion such to assist the early church to blend in and support common social and cultural values and not to draw attention and avoid hostilities. From a more male perspective, there are those that

ardently support this passage as a perpetually valid ordinance regarding the proper place of women in the church *and* at home (DeSilva, 2004).

Through exegetical study, it appears that Paul was looking to send a message to Timothy about the issues of the times and not to make an overall assessment of women's capabilities for leadership. The terms teaching, leadership and authority have been intertwined through the ages and are often viewed as the same term creating confusion in today's society. Applying historical, societal and cultural lenses to this particular scripture, the notion of women being subservient to men was a societal issue and not a biblical or Christian issue, however, since it appears in the bible for believers and non-believers to see, it is suggested that this notion is a Christian perspective (DeSilva, 2004, p.760). As leadership evolves in both a secular and Christian perspective, a basic understanding of its roots is required before unfounded biases are assumed.

Areas for further study

A cursory review of the literature regarding this topic implies that there is much more research required to provide conclusions as it pertains to women in leadership and their associated acceptance and understood effectiveness. An area for research might entail a rigorous, quantitative approach to women in leadership that have Christianity as a basis for their values. Do Christian values mediate leadership effectiveness as it pertains to gender?

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