

## The First Step of Leadership

Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:8

Code: B130801

In a reaction against sexism, our society practices what you might call *reverse sexism*. Women are given prominence over men, and men are beaten down as irresponsible dullards who can't get anything right. Many men invite and deserve this treatment, caring only for pleasure and entertainment. Many women are glad to give it, thrilled at the chance to turn the tables on male chauvinism. And on it goes, as fallen humans live out the curse of Genesis 3.

But it should not be so with Christian men and women. We are to be peaceful and orderly, reflecting the character of God. That's why, in 1 Timothy 2 and 3, Paul sets both genders straight, teaching them God's design for men and women in the church. He addresses men first, reminding them of their responsibility to lead. And the first role in which they lead is the vital area of prayer.

In 1 Timothy 2:8 Paul begins his instruction with this command: "Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension." That text sets the backdrop for the call to pray. "Therefore" refers to the first seven verses of 1 Timothy 2, which discuss the importance of praying for all people—especially non-Christian authorities. The responsibility of offering public prayer is the special duty of men.

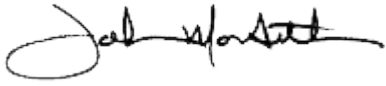
The Greek word translated "men" in verse 8 refers to men not in the generic sense, but to men in contrast to women. Men are to be the leaders when the church meets for corporate worship. In the Jewish synagogue, only men were permitted to pray, and that practice was continued in the church. The Greek phrase translated "in every place" refers to an official assembly of the church (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:8). Paul was saying that no matter where the church officially gathers, select men are to lead in public prayer.

Some claim that contradicts 1 Corinthians 11:5, where Paul permits women to pray and proclaim the Word. That passage, however, must be interpreted in light of 1 Corinthians 14:34, which forbids women to speak in the assembly. Women *are* permitted to pray and proclaim the Word, but not when the church meets for its official worship service. That in no way marks women as spiritually inferior (cf. Galatians 3:28) — not all men proclaim the Word in the assembly either, only those called and gifted to do so.

The second half of 1 Timothy 2:8—"Lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension"—specifies how men are to pray. The emphasis there is not on lifting literal hands but on offering worship in *holiness*. It's a specific qualification for the men selected to lead prayer in public worship: They must live holy lives. And their inner attitude is "without wrath and dissension." Church leaders are not characterized by anger and strife; they are to have loving, peacemaking hearts.

Leading the congregation to God in prayer is a simple way to begin leading in the church. But at the same time, it's a tremendous responsibility. By stepping up to take on that role, men can both serve the church and challenge our culture's low view of men.

Next time, we'll further examine God's design for leadership in the church. What sort of men can lead—what are the qualifications? Stay tuned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

(Adapted from [Divine Design](#). All Scripture quotations are from the [New American Standard Bible](#).)

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