

**Active Submission**

Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:12–14

Code: B130904

Last time, we saw that women are not to be in authority over men but are to “remain quiet” (1 Timothy 2:12). Obviously, that doesn’t mean a woman must never speak at all. Women are a vital part—a vital *half*—of the church. It would be a terrible loss to exclude them from church life. So what kind of involvement is acceptable?

An important aspect of church life is hearing the Word taught. In 1 Corinthians 14:35, Paul ensures that women have every opportunity to understand Scripture as well as men: “If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home.”

That command indicates certain women were disrupting the church service by asking questions. If they desired to learn, disrupting the church service was not the way to do it. The acceptable outlet for questions and lengthy discussion was to be at home with their husbands.

As a side note, that verse implies that Christian husbands should be well taught in the Word. Frustration with Christian men, often including their own husbands, who do not responsibly fulfill their God-given leadership assignments can tempt many women to go beyond their biblical roles.

But God has established the proper order and relationship of male and female roles in the church, and they are not to be violated for any reason. For a woman to assume a man’s role because he has neglected it merely compounds the problem. God has led women to do work that men have refused to do, but He does not lead them to accomplish that work through roles He has restricted to men.

That doesn’t mean, however, that God never permits women to speak His truth in public:

- Paul spoke with various churches and synagogues during his missionary journeys, answering questions from women as well as men (cf. Acts 17:2–4). I see nothing wrong with a woman asking questions or sharing what the Spirit of God has taught her out of the Word during informal Bible study and fellowship.
- I thank God for the many faithful women who serve on the mission field in a variety of public ways but refrain from leading the church. If there was ever a need for leadership on the mission field, it was in Paul’s day. He could have compromised by using women in leadership roles, but he didn’t. When a shortage of men exists on the mission field, don’t violate biblical principles but instead ask the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers (Matthew 9:38).
- Women can proclaim the Word of God except when the church meets for corporate worship. The Old Testament says, “The women who proclaim the good tidings are a great host” (Psalm 68:11). The New Testament gives examples of Mary, Anna, and Priscilla declaring God’s truth to men and women (Luke 1:46–55; 2:36–38; Acts 18:24–26).
- Women can pray in public. Acts 1:13–14 describes a prayer meeting where women and men,

including Jesus' apostles, were present. But leading in prayer during an official meeting of the church is, as we've already seen, a role ordained for men (1 Timothy 2:8).

Women can still be actively involved in the life of the church. Appropriate times abound for men and women to share equally in exchanging questions and insights. But when the church comes together as a body to worship God, His standards are clear: The role of leadership is reserved for men.

But why is that the case? What's the basis for that authority structure?

A popular view is that woman's subordinate role is a result of the Fall. Since God reversed the effects of the curse through Christ, some argue that He abolished differing male and female roles. Paul, however, grounds woman's subordinate role in the order of creation, not in the Fall: "For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:13). Eve was created after Adam to be his helper (Genesis 2:18)—she was designed to follow his lead, live on his provisions, and find safety in his strength. Such tendencies were from that point on built into all women.

Some have argued that Paul's teaching was prompted by a cultural situation at Ephesus and hence is not applicable today. But this teaching was not for Ephesus alone—for example, he taught the same truth to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:8–9).

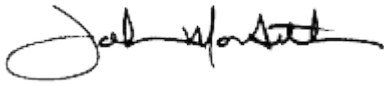
Paul does not derive woman's role from the Fall; he uses that event as further corroboration. He points out that "it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Timothy 2:14).

We usually connect the Fall with Adam since Romans 5:12–21 speaks repeatedly of the one man (Adam) who ushered sin and death into the world. Although he was not deceived by Satan, as was Eve, Adam still chose to disobey God. As the head of their relationship, he bore ultimate responsibility. But we must keep in mind that he didn't actually fall first—Eve did (Genesis 3:1–6). When Eve abandoned the protection of Adam's leadership and attempted to deal independently with the enemy, she was deceived.

By being so easily deceived, Eve revealed her inability to lead effectively. She had met more than her match in Satan. The Greek word translated "deceived" in 1 Timothy 2:14 is a particularly strong term: It refers to being *thoroughly* deceived. When a woman leaves the shelter of her protector, she exposes a certain amount of vulnerability.

The Fall resulted not only from direct disobedience of God's command but also from a violation of the divinely appointed role of the sexes. Eve acted independently and assumed the role of leadership; Adam abdicated his leadership and followed Eve's lead. That does not mean Adam was less culpable than Eve, or that she was more defective—both of them chose to sin. We're all vulnerable in different ways.

Christians affirm the leadership of men in the church because it is established by creation and confirmed by the Fall. The headship of man, then, was part of God's design from the beginning. The tragic experience of the Fall confirmed the wisdom of that design. No daughter of Eve should follow her path and enter the forbidden territory of authority intended for men.



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

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