

The Tremendous Contribution of Women

Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:15

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God designed life to revolve around relationships, and within those relationships are differing roles. In our society, unfortunately, more emphasis is placed on individuality than on relationships. People seek to satisfy themselves and focus on their rights rather than on how they can best serve others. When men and women refuse to accept their God-ordained roles in the church, family, and community, they undermine the Lord's foundational design for those institutions and all the relationships involved.

Women are *not* inferior to men; they simply have a different role. Many people believe the only place of power and influence in society is in a leadership position, assuming it is more fulfilling to lead than to follow. But people in nonleadership roles can be very influential. Besides, a leader carries a heavy load of responsibility that is not always desirable (James 3:1).

The notion that the greatest experience in life is to be on top of the pile and controlling everything is an illusion. And it is women who suffer most from that misperception as the world pressures them to climb the ladder, forsaking God's design for them. Society, in turn, suffers from not receiving the benefit of a woman's best effort in her God-given role.

First Timothy 2:15 speaks somewhat cryptically of the influence women have by pursuing their strengths: "But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint." The context helps our understanding: verse 14 speaks of women being in sin; verse 15, of women being saved. Paul was making a clever contrast.

"Preserved" is from *sōzō*, the common New Testament word for salvation. Paul obviously does not intend to teach that women are saved from sin "through the bearing of children." That would contradict the New Testament's teaching that salvation is by faith alone.

Paul taught that although a woman precipitated the Fall, women are preserved from that stigma through childbearing. A woman led the human race into sin, yet women benefit humankind by replenishing it. Beyond that, they have the opportunity to lead the race to godliness through their influence on their children. Far from being second-class citizens, women have the primary responsibility for training their children in godliness.

A mother's virtue has a profound impact on the life of her children. Mothers usually spend far more time with their children than do their fathers and thus have the greater influence. For women to fulfill their calling to raise children in godliness, they must "continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint" (1 Timothy 2:15). To raise godly children, a woman must be godly herself.

Obviously God doesn't want all women to be mothers. Some He doesn't even want married—He has given them the gift of singleness (1 Corinthians 7). Others He allows to be childless for His own purposes. But as a general rule, motherhood is the greatest contribution a woman can make to the

human race. The pain of childbearing was the punishment for the first sin, but the bearing of children delivers women from the stigma of that sin.

A woman also has influence in the church by utilizing her spiritual gifts. The Bible teaches that each Christian, at the moment of salvation, receives complementary spiritual gifts from God that enable the church to function smoothly (Romans 12:3–14; 1 Corinthians 12:4–30; Ephesians 4:1–13). The gifts come in two categories: speaking gifts and serving gifts (1 Peter 4:10–11). Those gifted in speaking excel in one or more of the following: teaching, wisdom (giving practical advice), knowledge (imparting scholarly information), exhortation, and leadership. Those gifted in serving have one or more of these strengths: showing mercy, having strong faith (especially manifested in prayer), giving (meeting needs), discerning truth from error, helping (doing basic essentials), and administering or organizing.

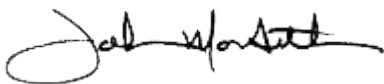
Spiritual gifts—as opposed to church offices—are not gender defined in Scripture. An important challenge for men in church leadership is to encourage and provide opportunities for both men and women to minister to the Body of Christ in ways that genuinely employ their spiritual gifts, whether speaking or serving.

God does see fit to gift some women with leadership and teaching abilities. They can and do use those gifts in situations apart from the worship service of the church—a women’s Bible study, fellowship group, prayer meeting, or class situation, for example. There’s plenty of opportunity for women to exercise their gifts and other abilities in a manner consistent with God’s design.

Our text in 1 Timothy 2, far from being an insult to a woman’s intelligence, instead provides practical direction on how she can best apply her skills. And one of those skills may be teaching.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul taught women to accept their God-given roles. They must not seek the leadership role in the church. How tragic that so many women feel their lives are unfulfilled because they can’t function in the same role as men! Women can have a great impact through raising godly children and exercising their spiritual gifts. If a woman is godly and if God chooses to give her children whom she raises in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4), she will have a profound influence on a new generation. Men have the outward, overt leadership by God’s design, but women can have just as great an influence indirectly.

God has designed male and female roles with perfect wisdom. Men are to provide loving leadership, but they can’t lead alone. They need powerful support, and God has designed women to provide it. Of course, not all men will take prominent leadership positions, and many women *will* lead in some way. But when men and women work together in their God-given roles, they promote unity and growth in the Body of Christ. When each believer pursues what the Lord has created and gifted him or her to do, the church reflects the character of God and offers a preview of heaven to the watching world.



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

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