

Artemis with the teachings of the Old Testament. A widespread Gnostic version of the story of Adam and Eve suggested Eve was the illuminator of mankind because she was the first to receive “true knowledge” from the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Gnostics believed that Eve taught this new revelation to Adam. Adam, they said was Eve’s son rather than her husband.

Taking this historic context into account, a correct interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:9-15 would be as follows: Paul tells women not to draw undue attention or set themselves above men. He says he would not allow a woman to exercise or “usurp” authority over a man or to teach the kind of false doctrine the Gnostics were teaching. For emphasis he then includes a correct version of creation theology and concludes by saying that women who live in faith, love, sanctity and self restraint can anticipate the lifting of the curse imposed upon Eve.

The good news of the Kingdom of God brings liberation to men and women from all vestiges of the curse. While scripture outlines God-ordained gender related structure within the Christian family, Global Christian Ministry Forum fully affirms the inclusion of women at all levels of church ministry, government and leadership without distinction.

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Global Christian Ministry Forum
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192 Cocalico Creek Road
Stevens, PA 17578
www.GCMF.org



WOMEN IN MINISTRY



Biblical Perspective Series

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

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Global Christian Ministry Forum International

There is a variety of evidence that women held positions of leadership in the Old Testament and participated in every facet of Church life in the New Testament. For example, Deborah was a prominent prophetess and judge of Israel (Deut. 4:4). Priscilla and her husband Aquila, were mentioned in Acts 18:26 as teaching Apollos, "But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."

Lydia opened her home for ministry and it suggests that she functioned in a pastoral capacity; "They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed." (Acts 16:40)

Chloe was another leader mentioned in I Cor. 1:11, "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you." Phoebe was a leader of the church at Cenchrea of such magnitude that Paul commanded the members of the church at Rome to receive her and assist her in whatever manner she requests. "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well." (Romans 16:1-2)

It is also true that through the centuries the church has released women and given them the authority to develop missions in foreign countries. They were often sent as teachers and deliverers of God's Word to the lost. However, circumstances usually demanded that they function in the ministry of apostleship and pastoral care. They set up and organized churches, as well as giving solid

comfort, guidance and spiritual care to those they shepherded. From beginning to end, these women faithfully accomplished the task God set before them.

Moreover it is clear from the New Testament Scriptures that God affords full equality to men and women. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal. 3:28. God is not one to show partiality. Acts 10:34.

Therefore, since we believe the Bible does not contradict itself, we must offer an explanation of certain controversial Scriptures.

In Genesis 3: 16 Eve was cursed by God for her disobedience. This curse had two parts – she would suffer pain in childbirth and she would be subservient to her husband. It is interesting to note that some church bodies routinely pray that women will be spared the pain of childbirth but then reinforce subjection. By doing so they are asking God to eliminate half of the curse. Since the New Testament teaches that Christ has become the curse for us, we should pray for the lifting of the entire curse and then show by our action that we believe women are set free.

In 1 Peter 3:7 the Apostle refers to wives as the "weaker vessel". It is true that in our physical bodies women are weaker than men, but this is not true in the spirit. It is also true that a fine china teacup is weaker than a coffee mug, but both can hold the same liquid!

In I Cor. 14:34 Paul says, "Let the women keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak.....And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home...." Yet in chapter 11 of this same Epistle Paul lays a foundation for women who would pray or prophesy. The only explanation for this obvious contradiction is that Paul expected

women to contribute to the spiritual life of the church but he did not want them interrupting a service to ask questions of their husbands. Some Bible scholars believe that women in the Corinthian Church, who sat separate from the men, were calling questions across the floor creating a constant disturbance.

The most controversial Scripture of all is found in 1 Tim. 2:9-15. "Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness. Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

This portion of Scripture must be read in its entirety and placed in historic context to be understood. Timothy was in Ephesus and Paul's teaching was focused on Timothy's cultural environment and his specific pastoral challenges. Ephesus was the world centre of paganism governed spiritually by the female deity Artemis, whom the Romans called Diana. The cult of Artemis taught the superiority of the female and advocated female domination of the male. It espoused a doctrine of feminine procreation without male involvement. The cult was characterized by sexual perversion. Also present in Ephesus was a group of Jewish Gnostics. Gnostics acknowledged spirit guides and combined the teachings of