



TIME OF GRACE®

God & Gender: In the Church (Parts 1 and 2)

Study Notes

Summary

First Timothy chapter 2 is a chapter in the Bible many Christians wish was not written. The apostle Paul's words seem patriarchal and downright impossible. No elaborate hairstyles? or expensive clothes? Women in church must be "quiet"? Really? Both parts of this message, which are based on 1 Corinthians, seek to faithfully explore Paul's provocative words from 1 Timothy in context and the issue of men and women working together in the church.

UNIQUE

UNITED

- 1 Corinthians 11:3: But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.
- Heads are _____ and _____.
- 1 Corinthians 14:34: Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.
- 1 Corinthians 12:25: . . . so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.
- Uniting Truth #1: I _____ you.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8: ⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always

perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

- Uniting Truth #2: I _____ you.
- Big Idea: Don't miss the _____.

Points to Ponder

1. Read 1 Timothy 2:11-13. Find at least one connection between these verses and what you've learned in Part 1 and Part 2 of this message.
2. Look again at 1 Timothy 2:13. Why is it so important to understand the connection between our callings and God's original creation?
3. Evaluate: "The church is an upside-down place where the one who wants to be the greatest must be the servant of all."—Dr. Mark Paustian, *More Prepared to Answer*

Homework for Next Week

Read 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Time of Grace Ministry
God and Gender: In the Church (Part 1)
1 Corinthians 11:3, 13:4-8, 14:34
June 21, 2020

Pastor Mike Novotny

She didn't just want to repeat the traditions of her church experience or just say whatever culture's current vote was. No, she wanted to know what God said. And so, we met for coffee. We both brought our Bibles, we opened up to the same chapters and verses and we studied this topic; gender in the church. And it took us two hours.

The other day, I had an unexpected conversation about gender with the three most important females in my life. It was just a regular night in the Novotny household. I grabbed our Time of Grace devotional book and my wife cuddled up with our two daughters, teeth brushed, jammies on, time in the word of God. And the devotion we happened to turn to for that day was about fitting in. The author told a story about being the girl who was the last one picked at the recess kickball game. And I was barely through the end of reading the devotion when one of my daughters slowly nodded. "That happens to me, Daddy. I'm always the last one picked." I asked her why that was. She said, "The boys always pick the girls last because we're girls."

And really quickly, that devotional got emotional for me as a father. I asked my daughter to tell me more about her experience on the playground; what exactly happened and how many times and who said what and how often? And then I turned to my other daughter and asked her what it was like to be a girl at her school. I turned to my wife and asked her to relive some of those memories of growing up; of boys and girls trying to work together in the same place. And it opened this door to a huge discussion that matters so much to me as a father: Where do the women in my life fit into this bigger culture? How did God make them uniquely and wonderfully in their mother's womb? What makes them similar to men like me and what might make them different? And how does it matter in the kingdom of God when those different but same people try to work together in the same place? God could care less about how fast you can run around the bases or kick some inflated rubber ball but he does care about how boys and girls, men and women, work together in love to carry out his will.

And that's what I want to talk to you about today; not a kickball game. Today, you're going to hear the first of a two-part message about how gender works in the church. When boys and girls, men and women, all line up together and we have to figure out how this works. How we can work together on the same team, who's picked to be the preacher, the pastor, the teacher, the leader. Who serves where and when and how and how often? As so many of you know, those are huge questions and they're questions that people don't always pick the right answers to. Sometimes, like chauvinistic boys on the playground, we assume things about certain genders; we disqualify where we don't have to. There's so much tradition, so many family customs, denominational traditions that have carried on - some good and some not - and that's why today

I'm so excited to talk to you. Not as just some guy, not as some leader of a church. I want to open the word of God and get back to what our Father thinks because just like as I do with my daughters, just like it's personal and emotional and I care so much about the way they're treated, our Father, our Father in heaven, cares about every son, every daughter, every man, every woman, every boy and girl that he knit together in their mother's womb. So today, we're going to start that conversation: How are we unique? What makes us united? What does a perfect father say to his family? I hope you enjoy this message as we work together, male and female, to carry out God's will for his glory and his kingdom.

If you're just jumping in with us this week, I really, really want to encourage you after church to go online to our website, to our Facebook page, to your favorite podcast app and check out week one because last week, God really laid the foundation for everything that we're going to hear. Jesus is the foundation; he's the center. He's the very core of this whole discussion of God and gender. That was last week. And next week, if I can get you to come back, we're going to talk about gender within marriage. What does the Bible say specifically about what that chart means for our relationship? You know, if you're dating or if you're a husband or a wife, if you're planning a wedding, what does like a good, Christian, God-pleasing relationship look like? What does the Bible mean in 1 Peter 3 and in the book of Colossians and in Ephesians 5 where it talks about like these distinctions between men and women? At one point, it even says the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. What does that look like and what is that not saying? We're going to wrestle with those controversial questions next week. If I can get you to come back, we're going to tackle a huge question for us culturally; we're going to talk about transgender and what happens when it's not just a Hollywood headline but it's your story or the story of your brother or your daughter or your cousin. When you feel like the body that God gave you doesn't match the mind and the way that you feel, what do you do? What does it look like for a Christian to be full of both grace and truth with compassion, love, and the commitment to God's teachings - how should we handle that as a church and how should you handle that as a Christian?

But you're going to have to wait for all that because today, I want to talk about gender and the church. I want to talk about what those "uniques" and "uniteds" that we learned on the first pages of the Bible have to do with this; when we gather together as men and women, as brothers and sisters, of our one Father in heaven. And I want to talk to you about that because I'm remembering the conversation I had with her. A few months ago, an email popped up in my inbox from a young woman who sometimes comes to our church but I've never talked to face-to-face. And she had questions and, to be honest, she had some big frustrations with gender in the church. I could tell very quickly from her email that she cared; that she had a great faith, she was a smart, intelligent woman, that she really did love Jesus. She wanted to do his will but what she had seen in the church didn't seem good or right or true or healthy. And so, I emailed her back and I said, "Hey, before we sit down and talk, here's some passages that I really think about with this topic. You should read them, too." And so she did and she emailed me back and here's what she said: "Some of these passages seem abrupt, harsh, and almost out of context. I've heard them wrongly applied more times than I could count but I never understood them well enough to give a God-approved reply." And I really like that. I like that she was honest with me. You know, I'm twice her age, I'm the pastor of the church, I'm the one with all the theological

degrees, but she was honest enough to say, "This just doesn't seem right. I've heard this before but it seemed out of context and wrongly applied." But she was also humble and that's what I loved about her most. It would have been so easy for her as a college student to get sucked into that like cultural lie that truth is just whatever you think it is. Just to think that whatever she felt or she thought was right, she didn't believe that. Did you catch that? She wanted a God-approved reply. She didn't just want to repeat the traditions of her church experience or just say whatever culture's current vote was. No, she wanted to know what God said. And so, we met for coffee. We both brought our Bibles, we opened up to the same chapters and verses and we studied this topic; gender in the church. And it took us two hours.

And before I tell you what happened at the end of that conversation, I'm kind of curious about you. What's been your experience with gender in the church? I have a hunch your experiences are pretty different. And for some of you, I would bet this whole thing is kind of new. That when that young woman said, "Oh, I've heard these passages before," you would kind of admit, "Well, I don't think that I have." Maybe you're new to church; you're new to the Bible. If I said to name one or two passages about gender in the Scriptures, you'd look back at me blankly because you're trying to figure out sin and salvation and who Jesus is and this seems kind of deep. But for others of you, that's not the case. Some of you really do know about these passages and honestly, it's kind of confusing. Maybe you've noticed that at our church, there are five different people who sometimes preach. There's Mike, Michael, Tim, Jim, and Bill. And do you know what those five have in common? They're guys. In the 10 years of our church's history, a woman has never stood on here on a Sunday and preached a sermon to God's people. And maybe that's confusing because you've seen other churches, you've seen other ministries on TV where that's not the case, so you know, why is that? If we're using the same Bible, if we're reading the same chapters and verses, is it just like a tradition of this church? Is there some truth to that? Why the distinction and the difference? For others of you though, I would bet the issue isn't confusion; it's more frustration. Maybe you grew up in a church where these passages were quoted pretty often. Here at our church we do this, and here's the passage, and here's why God says it's different, and you need to accept it, case closed. And like this young woman, it just didn't feel right. It felt abrupt and it felt harsh and for all the talk of God's love for the world and we have the same Father in heaven and we're one in Christ, it just didn't feel that way, especially as a woman in a church like that. And so, you enter this conversation with a lot of emotion and a lot of experience and you just don't know how you feel. Like is this actually what the Bible says or has it been twisted and have we gotten it wrong?

But I wonder if there's a couple of you whose experiences are nothing like that. I wonder if there's a few of you who know these passages, you've heard these passages, you've grown up with this distinction, and you're one of those rare people who has experienced something different; something really good. Maybe you've been to a church where both the men and the women were a lot like Jesus. They were humble and they were kind and they served each other sacrificially and so in your church community, there was love and there was trust, and it was so little about the ultimate decision or who had this position. There was just something beautiful and united about it. It's kind of like when a pitcher throws a no hitter and you realize that him and the catcher have been communicating and getting on the same page the entire game and that's where the victory came from. It was kind of like a ballroom dance where, you know,

officially on paper there's someone who's leading but you would never guess from watching it because it's so beautiful and so united. There's no tug back and forth and there's no struggle; it's just beautiful. And if your church experience has been like that, I want to tell you today that's what I'm after. I want this church to give experiences to men and women like that. I want you, no matter what your gender, no matter what the letters are on your chromosomes, when you come into this place and if you choose to be part of our church family, that this would be unique and you would feel blessed to be here. I want this to be a place where there's no power struggle, there's no vicious debates, there's no parking lot conversations. Instead, the way we love each other and appreciate each other and serve each other almost makes this a non-issue. Like a husband and wife who love and serve each other so well, you would almost never guess that there's an official head of the household because it just works; because there's so much love and so much service, there's so much trust.

Now to become a church like that, I need to tell you today about a church that was nothing like that; the first century church in Corinth. You might know the New Testament has two letters, one called 1 Corinthians and another called 2 Corinthians that the apostle Paul wrote to this church. And I want to tell you that they were a messed up church; like really messed up. You think our church has issues? Here's what happened in the Corinthian church. There was a guy in the church who was sleeping with his step-mom. There were people who were going to prostitutes after worship was done. There were members who were suing each other in court in front of unbelievers and some of the richer members of the church were getting off of work early, getting into the communion wine, and getting hammered before the second shift workers could show up for worship. That's messed up, alright? So if you think we've got issues to fix, they had tons of issues to fix. But do you know what one of their biggest issues to fix was? This. In 1 Corinthians, which is 16 chapters long, Paul has to spend four entire chapters fixing what was happening in church. When different people with different gifts and different genders were gathering together, the messed up Corinthian church messed this all up and they missed God's beautiful design. So I want to go back and show you what Paul wrote to that church and pray that we can use these words to make this church an incredible church to be a part of. So let's kick things off in 1 Corinthians 11. Here's what the apostle Paul says in verse three: "But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is man and the head of Christ is God." Well, there you go! If there are passages that I could take out of the Bible that would make my job much easier, this would be one of them. "The head of the woman is man." Now, what in the world does that mean? I'm going to tell you but before I get to that, I want you to notice the last words of that verse: "The head of Christ is God" because that little phrase like messes with our assumptions and our emotions on this topic, doesn't it? The apostle Paul, when he gets into this controversial issue for the Corinthians and for Americans today, he wants to talk about the relationship between God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. And he says that the head of Christ is God, which is weird, isn't it? When we hear this idea that someone is the head of someone else or the husband is the head of the household, we kind of cringe because it makes us feel like one is more important than the other; that one is superior and the other is inferior. You know, this one really matters to God and this one doesn't. But then we read that: The head of Christ is God. That apparently, in the relationship between God the Father and his Son Jesus, one of them was the head and it wasn't Jesus. One of them was responsible for the big plan and the other had to submit to the plan and the one who submitted

was Jesus. There was only one of them who could get the final word; only one whose will could sometimes be done and apparently, in that relationship, it wasn't Jesus.

And yet, when you Christians walked into church today, I bet you didn't feel bad for Jesus. I bet you didn't pity him or think he was inferior or think he was a doormat in the relationship with the Father. I bet you loved him, you respected him, you thought he was bold and humble and strong and sacrificial. To be Jesus, who is not the head, is beautiful. Because maybe you know enough about Jesus' relationship with his heavenly Father to realize it was. That at least two times in their relationship, the Father actually like ripped open the heavens itself so his voice could boom and say, "This is my Son whom I love; with him I'm well pleased." And Jesus was so loved by the Father that when he had to submit to his head, when he had to follow his will, it wasn't hard. He chose it and it was beautiful. In fact, if you come to this church Sunday after Sunday, we force you to see that every single time. Did you know that when you walked into our church today and you got your pen and your program from the ushers that you walked past the submission of Jesus to his heavenly head? There's a big cross right by the main doors that lead into our church and on it are etched a saying that Jesus spoke the night before he died. Maybe you recognize this picture? He said, "Father, your will be done." Jesus said, you know, if there's any other way besides going to the cross and suffering for the sins of the world, if there's any other way, Father, I want to go that other way but not my will, but your will be done. Why would Jesus say that? I mean, he's the Savior; he's the Son of God. Why wouldn't he say, "No, my will be done?" And the answer is because the head of Christ is God.

And so, Paul wants you thinking about that. He's about to tell us what it means to be a man or a woman in the church but whatever we're about to say, whatever we're about to decide, if that relationship between men and women here does not look like the perfect relationship between the Father and the Son, we've missed it. If we have any application or any ultimate call that doesn't make women feel like Jesus and men feel like our Father in heaven, we've missed it. No, it's in this beautiful gospel context that the apostle Paul then says these words: "The head of the woman is man." That within the church, a man is called to be like God the Father and a woman is called to be like Jesus himself, which is pretty sweet, huh? I mean, for all of us, if I said guys, we are called to be like God, we'd be like, "Oh, okay!" And ladies, if I said here's what you get to do in our church; you get to be like Jesus, you'd say, "Wow!" There's nothing inferior, nothing degrading, nothing weak, nothing to be envied or given up. To be like the Father or the Son is this beautiful calling that God has given to the church. Now okay, but what does that mean? If men are called to be like God the Father, to be like the head in this relationship, you know, practically, what does that mean for us? Well, there's two things I can think about and if you're taking notes in your program, I want you to write them down. Here's what I know about heads. Number one, heads are important. A body without a head is not a good body. Heads are important and primarily because heads will set the direction that the whole body goes. Do I have any runners in church today? Raise your hand if you like to run outside. No? Am I the only one? Alright, there's three of us here. You'll get this analogy. When you run, whatever you look at, your body drifts towards, right? Like if I'm running side-by-side with a couple of friends and if I'm looking to the side, you know, my body just starts drifting in those directions. It's the same with driving or riding a motorcycle, right? When you take lessons, you learn that what you look at, your body just naturally is going to go towards and that's the beautiful calling that the Father

had. He like had a direction; he had a plan to love and save the world. This is the way that he and Jesus were going to go and a good, godly man has the same thing. He's not a bump in the spiritual log; he has a direction and a vision and a plan where he wants to take people closer to Jesus, closer to God, and he's passionate about it. He leads and he influences and he loves in that direction. Heads are important.

And number two, we also need to remember that heads are dependent. I've never seen a disconnected head on the ground and thought, "You're doing great! Look at you!" Your fancy roll and your beautiful eyes. I mean the head, if it could somehow be living, it could look in a direction, it could have a way it wanted to go, but without the body, it's not going to get there. And it kind of reminds me of how God created woman in the beginning; he designed her as a helper because a good, godly woman helps to get to this beautiful, glorifying place closer to God. A head is important; a man is important but he is never independent. He's totally dependent on the gifts of faith and the participation of the women in his church.

So that's Paul's foundation and in the rest of chapter 11, he applies it. He says to the Corinthians so here's what you should do with head coverings and hairstyles. Yep, that's what he said; you can read the rest of it after church. The subtitle in my Bible says, "Uncovering the head in worship." Apparently, the Corinthians had these really unique customs that what you like wore on your head, like some sort of veil or hat, made some statement about what you believed about God. Or the length of your hair as a man or a woman was like a really shocking cultural statement and so Paul had to figure that out. You know, how does that apply to this principle that God has called men to be like their Father in heaven and to lead this relationship? And to be honest, it's super confusing. I've been a pastor for 12 years; I've never had like a deep, divisive discussion about head coverings in church. I've never had to tell a guy what kind of hairstyle he should have or a woman not to wear hair like that when she comes to church. It's not like our cultural application; it's not our issue. And I think that's why a lot of Christians, you know, kind of get stuck in chapter 11 and so here's what they do: "Oh." They jump ahead to 1 Corinthians 14 where Paul comes back to this issue and he speaks really directly. He's talking about like these authoritative teaching positions in the church where someone stands up and they preach the word of God and people are expected to listen and to submit to the one that God has called and he says something really direct in 1 Corinthians 14:34. Check out these words. He says, "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak but must be in submission as the law says."

And there you go! Some people say there is a distinction between men and women. We're not making this up, it's not church tradition, it's right there in the Holy Scriptures. The law of God says that there are times that God only wants a man to stand up and speak; that it wouldn't be right if a woman did it. That she should be silent in those moments, she should listen, and she should submit as the law says. Or as Paul put it to his pastor friend, Timothy: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority for Adam was formed first and then Eve." And so the church says there it is; the word of the Lord. Case closed. But that would be a big mistake; a really, really big mistake. Do you know why? Because this didn't come after this.

Well, I hope you enjoyed the start of this important and essential conversation that God has for us. Next week, we're going to wrap up that discussion and talk so much more about how male and female work together in the church. I hope you can join us for our next segment of God and gender.