



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. ⁸Love 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 2)
1 Corinthians 11:3, 13:4-8, 14:34
June 28, 2020

Pastor Mike Novotny

What's been your experience with gender in the church? I have a hunch your experiences are pretty different: "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."

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, they messed up the Corinthian church and they missed God's beautiful design. When boys and girls, men and women, all line up together and 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 for. 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.

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 I do with my daughters, just like it's personal and emotional and I care so much about the way that they're treated, 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.

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. My math teacher taught me back in first grade that the number 14 does not come after the number 11; there's something in the middle - a 12 and a thirteen. And I'll propose to you why this gets so messy and uncomfortable and ugly in the church; why it seems, in her words, abrupt and harsh and out of context is because some people, some churches, miss the middle. And if we miss the middle, we're going to mess it up, too. If we try to apply this idea of like the head of the woman is man so therefore, women should be silent and submit as the law says and we skip what's in the middle, we're going to mess this up in a huge way. So today, I've got to teach you the middle.

Do you know what's on the next page of 1 Corinthians? Chapter twelve. And do you know what 1 Corinthians 12 is about? How much we need each other. There Paul talks about the body of Christ and how every part in the body, every person in the Christian church, is so valuable and so necessary. Now, I told you the Corinthians were a messed up church so they really messed this up. Some of the people in their church - I'm guessing a lot of the men who maybe had more positions of influence and responsibility - looked at a lot of other people, perhaps a lot of the

women, and thought we don't need you. Like, we'll take care of the hard work, we're going to make the plan, we're going to cast a vision, we're going to preach the sermons. You just listen in silence and submit and the church is going to be good and Paul knew that it wouldn't. And he also knew at that same church there were a whole bunch of people who felt inferior; that they weren't needed or necessary. They were jealous and envious. And Paul said, "No, no, no. You have no clue how important you are in the family of God and in the body of Christ. You need each other. It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what your gender, what your position, what your place. You need each other."

That's why he wrote these powerful words in 1 Corinthians 12. He said, "There should be no division in the body." No division between male and female, important or not, superior or inferior, "but its parts should have equal concern for each other." Equal concern. If every man is not concerned for every woman, he's missed the middle. If every woman doesn't see the value and importance of every man, they've missed the middle. We can't - unless we want to mess this up - miss the middle and Paul said, "Here's the middle: I need you." In fact, if you're taking notes, I'd love for you to write that down. This is the truth that unites us as men and women in the church; that I need you and you need me. At the same time, you are both needed and needy. None of us are independent and the church will never work until we truly believe that; that whoever walks through its doors, we desperately need them.

And do you know what comes next? Chapter thirteen. Do you know what's in 1 Corinthians 13? Not a poem about weddings. If you've ever been to a Christian wedding before, people love to read this because it's this beautiful definition of love; of patience and kindness and humility and serving each other. It really fits well in a marriage. But Paul didn't write it for his best man speech; he wrote it to the messed up Corinthians who didn't value each other as men and women. He wrote to men who were impatient, men who were proud, men who didn't protect the women in their church. He wrote it to women who were sometimes envious or easily angered or didn't rejoice in the truth of this God-given distinction. And to that messed up church, Paul wrote these incredible words, 1 Corinthians 13. He said, "Love is patient" and in women, "love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast. It is not proud. Love does not dishonor others. It's not self-seeking, not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." And Paul said if we miss that, these distinctions will divide us and they'll destroy us, but if we get that, if we love each other in selflessness, in kindness, in patience, and in passion, we're going to be okay. That's the second uniting truth I want you to write down; not just that I need you but I love you.

And then the apostle Paul gets to this; then he's ready to teach them about the distinction about men and women, how the Father and the Son, how this all fits together in the church but he knows it's never going to work unless we get the middle. And so if I was going to give you one big idea, one thing to always think about when we wrestle with these controversial issues in our time, it's this: Don't miss the middle. You know, I had a lot of conversations in the past two weeks. Preparing for this sermon series and, especially preparing for today, I talked to a number of men and I talked to a whole lot of women. I emailed questions, I sat at coffee shops, in friend's garages, I got my haircut and I asked the questions, I asked my wife as we were riding in the car. I went out to dinner. I asked woman after woman after woman some tough questions.

Tell me what it's like to be a woman? And tell me what it's like to be a woman in the church? And a bunch of conversations stood out to me but I'm going to tell you about two.

One is a conversation that I had with a man; a pastor from our staff, Pastor Jim. Pastor Jim has done a lot of counseling over the years and he does a bulk of the counseling at our church. And I remember what he said to me. He said, "Mike, you can't forget the heartbreakingly high number of women who have spent their lives around men who are nothing like God." Their fathers, the guys at their high school, their boyfriends, their husbands, people who have been emotionally manipulative, verbally abusive, or physically aggressive. You have to remember, you know, this relationship between the Father and Son is beautiful on paper but a lot of guys aren't much like the Father at all. They're not selfless and they don't boom with all of their authority "I love you and I need you to carry out my plans for our family." They haven't experienced that and Pastor Jim said, "Mike, you have to remember how hard it is to hear something like this when you've been through something like that." And he's right. I bet if this doesn't bother you much, you've been blessed with some really great men. A good father, men who respected and valued you, a pastor who asked you questions and listened to your answers and your wisdom helped shape his sermons. But if you haven't had that, I just want to tell you today that those men missed the middle. That what God is teaching, what is good and right and true, what we're going to stand up for here at our church is not what you've been through. If a man was aggressive towards you, if he didn't protect you, if he didn't persevere in loving you, I just want to tell you that was wrong. It's not what we stand for and thank God it's not what our Father stands for. You were sinned against and I want you to know there's a difference. The goal of our church is not to make you go through that again; it's not to trample you underneath the feet of men. Our goal is to raise up every man to be like God and call you to this holy place to be like Jesus.

The second conversation I had was just as hard. I invited a couple of friends of mine to have lunch with me the other day and I didn't just ask them what it's like to be a woman; I asked them what is it like to be a woman at the church where I'm the pastor? And when I invited them out to lunch, I had no clue how hard that conversation was going to be. See, in the back of my mind, I thought that I did this pretty well. I thought I spoke to enough women and loved enough women and took the advice of a lot of women when I craft my sermons that they would have felt valued and loved and in some ways, they did. But I quickly realized that I had all too often missed the middle. And to be real, I wanted to argue; so many times I did argue too many times. But as I got back to the office and I sat and like the adrenaline stopped, that conversation broke me. And to think of the five years that I've been here at the church and not - and not valued women like our heavenly Father does - that got to me.

My friends told me about a men's conference that I got our church pumped up about. We promoted it, we had videos and posters, we tried to rally 50 guys to step up and to lead but do you know what we did for the women's conference that's coming up in six weeks? Nothing. And it's not that I didn't know about it; I'm the keynote speaker at it and I said nothing. And what is it like to be a member of a church where you notice that distinction? Where it has nothing to do with the differences that God calls us to as men and women but you say you value men and women so why didn't you then? And we talked about the conversations that sometimes our male leaders have behind closed doors that we didn't share with the women at our church; times when we are thinking about them in love, when we have taken their lifestyles and their

considerations in mind, when we're thinking deeply about them. But do you know love doesn't mean much if you don't say it? And if five male dudes sit in a room behind a closed door and they love women but they don't get up and express it, it does nothing. And so, men, I want to talk to you today. I want to challenge you in joining me in making this church a better place for women. I want you to join me in asking more questions and listening to more answers. I want you to join me in opening your eyes wider to see the gifts of women and how we can leverage them for the good of this direction that God wants to take us. I want you to join me in making sure that whatever position or responsibility or authority you might have at our church, that it's always used to serve, always used to include, and always used to love. Our church, it can do great, great things for God but we can't do it without them. We'd be a head without a body and we'd never run the race that God has called us to. So guys, let's be better. You might not know all the women at our church but you'll run into some of them after church. You'll drive home with some of them in your cars. You'll raise some of them as your daughters. Let's love them well and make sure that this place is nothing like the toxic stories that so many people have experienced in church.

And women, I want to challenge you, too, because it's easy for you to miss the middle, as well. I don't know if I have the right to say this as a dude but I'm your pastor too and I do love you so let me say this: Don't miss the middle. Sometimes when you feel overlooked or unloved, it is so easy to forget about the page that matters so much to God. And God says without love, it's nothing. And so when you get together - and especially when you get together and men are not around - please choose to be something. Don't give into that classic behavior that is not patient and not kind and not protective and not loving and not good because that won't be good for us. You might be right, I might have messed up, we might have messed up, but if your behavior does not look like Jesus, it means nothing and our church will do nothing that matters to Jesus.

Can I tell you, leadership is easy from a distance. It's easy to see the things that could have been done better no matter what the context. And so, ladies, we need you to help. We need your words and your prayers and your wisdom to help. You know, stereotypically, you out-word us and the Bible is a book full of words and so we need your help. For people like me who have to make high-level decisions for the church, no decision is a good one if it lacks empathy and so many of you have so much of it, we need your help. So please help. Choose love. Even in the midst of this distinction, like we didn't make it up, I didn't make it up, please don't hold it against me. Would you delight in the truth, even this one? And would you love like Jesus loved his heavenly Father?

And let me say something to all of you; to men and women, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters: Thank God for Jesus. You know how crappy I felt the other day when I realized what a failure I've been as a pastor? But by the grace of God, I remembered Jesus. That because of Jesus, I know who I am. I'm not a failure; I'm a child of God. That because of Jesus, you're not like some wretched man or woman; you've been redeemed and called a part of his family. Because Jesus came into this world and the head of man is Christ, he had a plan and he set his eyes on the cross and at the cross of Jesus, we find out that he is not easily angered and he keeps no record of wrongs. That he always perseveres and he always protects so that we can be saved. And we find out that Jesus submitted to his heavenly Father so that forgiveness could be ours.

So when we walk out of here today, it doesn't have to be with guilt or regret or shame; we can embrace and value it and admit what we've messed up and we can be better with the help of God.

Jesus shed his blood on the cross because he was a man and he stepped up like a rib to protect his church, to protect you, and Jesus helped. When he said, "Father, your will be done," he marched off to a cross he could have avoided so that we could live without shame and instead be part of the family of God. Which means when we leave here today, we don't have to do it alone. And to love every man, every woman in our church, to lead you well, it terrifies me until I remember that God is with me. That the God who knows how I should best love each one of you, he is with me. That the Holy Spirit who knows every one of your stories, who lives in your hearts, he's with me too and he can guide me and give me wisdom. This is going to be hard but we can do it with the Holy Spirit. And some of you will face incredible challenges with gender, with men and women understanding each other, appreciating each other, needing each other and loving each other, but you don't have to do it by yourself. You have a God who loves you and who will always be with you. And if you remember that, we're going to be okay.

If we need each other and we love each other, it's going to be okay. Like, if I need to get my way on one of those questions or issues and I let go of love, we're not going to be okay. But if we can embrace the middle, we need each other, we really do love each other, whatever we decide - and this changes from culture to culture and church to church - it's going to be okay. Because like a ballroom dance and the no hitter game, there will not be the tension; just cooperation as we take our unique genders and gifts and we unite them for the glory of God and the good of his people.

Don't miss the middle. Do this and we're going to make it because that's what she said. Remember that college girl, the coffee shop, these passages bother me, they're abrupt and harsh? We sat down for two hours with open Bibles. We read every one. We asked questions, we raised objections, and at the end of two hours, do you know what she did? She put down her pen and she smiled. This smart, driven, independent woman, she smiled and she rejoiced in the truth because we didn't miss the middle.

Before I left the coffee shop though, I noticed something - her Bible. It was as beat up and underlined and note-filled as my own. And it struck me that only one of us was going to stand here today and preach with authority but I couldn't have done it without her. Every Sunday, I get to stand up here as one of the heads of this church but without her wisdom, her experience, her email, her story, her faith, it won't work. But together, it does and it will. Brothers and sisters, I don't know who's sitting next to you but I know that you need them and if you love them, we're going to be okay.

Let's pray.

Dear Father, thank you for your love. And the worst part of preaching is that you always get me and I realize, as hard as I try, I'm not there yet and so many of us feel that way. God, you're opening our eyes to things we didn't see before, things that we missed, so thank you for your love. Thank you that your love is higher than the heavens and it's deeper than the depths. Thank you that we're made new because of Jesus. Thank you, Father, when we want to drop our heads in regret and sin and shame. You hold our head up and you remind us who we are; that we are made new through the blood of Jesus Christ.

I thank you, Jesus, that you are a submissive Savior; that you're God. You're so powerful and you're so wise but you are so humble that you said, "Father, your will be done." That's why we love you, it's why we worship you today, and it's what redeems this entire topic for us. Help us to remember that, God. When our culture wants to tell us this is wrong and evil and backwards and patriarchal, help us not to believe it because we know too much about you.

I pray today, God, for every man in this church; that he would have a plan like our Father did. A plan to lead spiritually, to be a blessing spiritually; a plan that's not for his own good but for the good of others. God, when I think about church and Bible study in the home and prayer, would you raise up right now in the hearts of a bunch of men to take a step and try to do something with your help and power? And I pray for every woman; that her faith would help - would help her church, would help her family, it would help because that's what you designed a woman to be.

Father, it would be easy for our culture, our church, to bail on this if we just didn't address this topic, if we avoided this issue, just because we wanted more people to come to our church but that wouldn't honor you. So help us to be faithful, help us to be humble, help us to not be shocked when people are shocked by this teaching, but instead not just lead them to this word but to the word about Jesus that makes us trust it and rejoice in it. Help us to be a faithful church, God, and just as much, help us to be a church that loves every person, male or female. We pray this all because we need to. Without your help, this isn't going to work but with you, Father, all things are possible. So we pray this in your beautiful, powerful name, Amen.