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Worship? What Does That Mean?

1 Timothy 2

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There is no doubt that 1 Timothy 2 is among the most controversial passages of Paul's writings. In this chapter it appears as if Paul calls men to pray and women to shut up.

Although it is short - only 15 verses - it is packed with controversy from beginning to end.

The first thing we need to recognise is why Paul wrote this letter. It was to give Timothy help in silencing false teachers - teachers who had apparently taken advantage of some women and led them astray. The context of the chapter is: how we should act in worship.

What may have been happening here is that some women were being drawn off into false doctrine by some church elders who had gone bad. Keep that in mind as we go through the chapter.

Paul encourages us to intercede for and thank God while we pray for our rulers. Even the ones we don't agree with.

Does this mean we have to agree with them? No. But it does mean we respect them and pray for them.

This is a pretty amazing statement considering that the ruler in Peter and Paul's day was Caesar Nero.

Why should we do this? To live "peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

So our aim is to pray for God's direction for these leaders so they will do what is right.

Timothy didn't need to know this - but those in Ephesus did - that Paul was God's emissary and they better listen!

So now to the good stuff: Questions we must ask:

Should this be applied universally for all believers at all times? Is it a complete handbook for church behaviour? Was Paul a chauvinist? Should I quit while I'm ahead?

I do not believe that should be applied universally. Paul tells Timothy to: "use a little wine because of your stomach." (5:23). Does that mean that anytime you have a stomach ache you need to break open a bottle of wine? Of course not.

We need to get clues from the text and from the context as to what is for that instance and what is universal.

Is this a complete church handbook? Was Paul a chauvinist? I don't believe so.

If you read all of Paul's writings - and understand the culture to which he wrote - I don't think he is anti-woman at all. For example in Ephesians 5:21 that husbands and wives should submit to one another. Paul treated the ministry team of Priscilla and Aquilla as equals.

Understand the culture

What was it like for women in Paul's day? When Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, women were seen as second class citizens. Women's behaviour was extremely limited in ancient times, much as the women of Afghanistan during the recent Taliban oppression. Kid let loose!!!!

Understand that Jesus had set them free - but did they understand how to use that freedom?

Jesus set women free - treated them with respect and as followers. The first person to see the Resurrected Christ was a woman.

Examples:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28 NIV).

With women of the first century church it was much the same. The women did not know what to do with their new found freedom and ended up being unduly influenced by false teachers.

You are not above your society

That means - get along with government don't flaunt your freedom in Christ - but pray for those above you.

Pray instead of argue

People love a good debate - but if we spent half as much time praying together as we do debating each other, think what we could accomplish

Don't dress up your outward appearance so much that you cloud who you really are.

This can go beyond clothes and attitude - maybe it is your possessions or your degrees or your position of power or monetary wealth or just a superior attitude.

Don't let the things in your life make it difficult to see Jesus inside of you!