

Elders - Part 2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 November 2023

Preacher: Stephen Murray

[0 : 0 0] up to 1 Timothy chapter 2. We're going to read the whole chapter, 1 Timothy chapter 2. You might wonder why we've taken some of the elements out of the service this morning, no pastoral prayer, no confessing the creed or anything like that. We've taken out to kind of shorten the front part of the service so that I can have a little bit more time in the pulpit today because we're tackling a really big topic, something I've actually never preached on in 10 years of pastoring in this church, but something we've taught in seminars and stuff but not in a sermon and I thought I needed a little bit more time to make sure there's clarity. What we're also going to do is we're going to have a Q&A; after the service. So straight after the service, if you want to go grab a coffee and tea and then come back, I'm going to still be here for another half an hour or so doing a Q&A; on anything that maybe you were confused by or you didn't agree with or wasn't clear in the sermon itself. So that's the reason for the strange different service this morning.

But 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 1, I'm going to read from verse 1 all the way to the end of the chapter. The Apostle Paul writes and he says, I urge then first of all that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Savior who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time and for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle.

I'm telling the truth, I'm not lying and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles. Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.

I also want the woman to dress modestly with decency and propriety, adorning themselves not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds appropriate for women who profess to worship God. A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man. She must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not the one deceived, it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety. Now I'm sure as I finish reading there you've got a whole lot of questions. So I'm going to pray and then we're going to dive into those questions. Let's pray.

[2 : 3 7] Father, this is your word and this is truth. King David will talk in the Psalms about how he sits and he meditates day and night on your precepts, how they thrill him. And yet we come to passages like this and we try to understand what's going on here and we're not sure if they thrill us when we read them at first glance. And so I pray that by your spirit you would help us this morning teach us truth. Not so that we might just know more things, but that we might know you and worship you. We ask for your help now for Christ's sake. Amen.

All right, so you want to keep that passage open in your Bibles. As I said, we're going to go a little bit longer this morning and there's going to be time for Q&A; afterwards. We've been doing a series called Jesus Loves the Church. We're in part 10 of this series looking at what we might call the doctrine of the church. How does God want us to think about local churches particularly and order those local churches? Now last week we looked at elders. What are elders? How do they work in the church? Particularly how do they work in a Presbyterian church, which is what we are. And we thought about that and I said, well, we can't just stay there. We've got to look at one other particular thing about elders because you're probably going to wonder about this if we don't look at this. So let me start this morning by asking this question. And that question is, how do you grow a church in a secular progressive city like Cape Town? Well, the answer is you preach a mildly controversial sermon on why only men can serve as elders in a local church. Now, surprisingly, you will not actually find that advice in any church growth manual anywhere ever. And that's because

I think the general sentiment is that the subject matter that we're going to talk about this morning is more likely to see people leave your church than join your church. So why do it?

Why then stand up and preach about this? We could have just kind of skipped past this section in our series on the doctrine of the church. I could have hoped that you didn't notice all the masculine pronouns that I used in last week's sermon about elders and then just move swiftly on to deacons because it's an office that I believe the Bible says both men and women can serve in. So why stop?

Why pause and talk about male-only eldership when it's such a controversial and emotionally charged subject? Now, there's more than one answer to that question. But the first and most important answer that I feel compelled to give is this. I personally am thoroughly convinced that this is what the Bible teaches. And because of our church's kind of high view of the scriptures that we believe the Bible is God's divine inspired word to us, that means I'm thoroughly convinced that this is what God's will is for the governance of local churches. So that's the first reason. Secondly, though, I think it lacks integrity and is probably actually a sign of cowardice, which I might have been guilty of in the past, to skip over hard parts of scripture. The uncomfortable parts, the confusing parts.

[5 : 50] It would, I think, be a shepherding failure on my part as a pastor for me to never touch on things just because they are contentious. So that's the second reason. And then the third, I think, well, I think there's a lot of confusion about gender and about gender roles in the church and even more broadly in the culture. And so this discussion about whether or not women can serve as elders is actually a subset in some ways of that larger discussion. And so the more clarity we can bring on what the Bible actually does or does not say about women in the church, I think the better we're going to be equipped to engage in that overall bigger discussion. So then with great fear and trepidation, I want to try and answer the question this morning. Is the office of elder in the New Testament restricted to men only?

That's what we're trying to answer this morning. Now before diving into the text, I want to talk about stories. Stories, and particularly our own personal stories, are incredibly powerful and formative in the way that we conceive of the world around us. So stories shape us. Stories form us.

They form the kind of people that we are. And the reason this topic is such an emotionally charged and sensitive topic is in one way, in one sense, because of stories. From a historical perspective, we have repeated stories of misogyny in the history of the relationship between men and women.

History is full of examples where men have denigrated women, where they have treated or conceived of women as inferior, exercised abusive authority over them, and restricted them in all sorts of unlawful ways. So we have that history. That has happened across cultures, across societies, and it has also sadly happened in Christian churches. So history is a very painful story on this count.

But then there are also personal stories. If you're a woman here this morning, it's probable that you have stories of misogyny that you've experienced in social interactions with men, in the workplace, maybe even in churches. And those are equally painful stories. And so we carry these stories.

[8 : 08] And so when a subject like male-only eldership then comes up, it almost feels too painful to go there. Like let's just rather throw our hands up in the air and say, well, who knows what the Apostle Paul's actually speaking about. Let's just not go there. Let's just pretend that part's not there.

But I think we must go there. I think we must go there because these passages come in the broader story of God's redemption, which is a story of light. It's a story of joy. It's a story of hope. It's a story of healing and restoration. And my fear is this. My fear is that if we ignore parts or finer details of that story, we might in fact miss out some of the key ingredients that God in His great wisdom has inserted into the story to bring about that ultimate healing and that ultimate restoration that we as broken people with all of our stories so desperately, desperately need. That's my fear.

Now let me say one other thing about story. And that is that I have a story in all of this. So for most of my ministerial career, I have wanted to be on the other side of this debate.

Today and in more recent decades, it's become common to talk about, you'll hear these two terms often, complementarians and egalitarians. So broadly, broadly speaking, both groups believe that men and women are created equal in worth and dignity by God. But complementarians believe that men and women have different complementary roles within the church and the home where the men are to take the servant leader role as elder and as husband in those respective spheres. So that's the complementarian view. Egalitarians, on the other hand, they believe that there should be no role distinction.

Both men and women can lead in the church and there should be mutuality or mutual submission in marriage. Now, almost my entire ministerial life, I have been in complementarian churches and ministry organizations, okay? And for years, I've wanted to leave. I've wanted to find biblical justification to change my conviction from complementarian to egalitarian. And so I have read and read and read and read and read and read and read and read and we could go for a long time here. And in some ways, actually, I was thinking about it. This is the hardest sermon I've ever had to preach, not because of the contentious nature of the subject matter, but because I've read too much on the subject over the last 20 years and now I've got to try and condense it all down into, cross fingers, 40 minutes.

[10 : 44] But my story is this. My story is that in all of that reading, in all of my wanting to be persuaded, genuinely wanting to be persuaded by egalitarian arguments, I just never have been.

I've just never found the arguments, the biblical arguments convincing. In the past 20 years, based on the study of the Bible and based on the study of Scripture, I've changed my view on baptism.

I've changed my view on church government. Those were not small changes without consequence. In each instance, I had to leave one denomination and join another because of those convictions. So I'm not afraid to change convictions on the basis of clear biblical teaching, even if that means I have to resign as pastor of this church. But up to this point, I've just not seen anything convincing enough in the egalitarian scholarship that has persuaded me, even though I wanted to be persuaded. Now that's my backstory. And I share that so you kind of know the heart from which this comes this morning.

So here's where we're going to go. As I mentioned, this discussion of male-only eldership is actually a subset of a larger discussion on the roles of men and women in the church. That bigger discussion is beyond the scope of what we can do this morning. But we first do need to say one or two general things about the inherent nature of men and women in the Bible. So we do that first, and then we're going to spend the bulk of our time looking at 1 Timothy 3 verses 11 to 15, which is the passage that most often gets cited with regards to this particular question. So some general comments about men and women in the Bible. Number one, our gender is not incidental to how God created us. It's not incidental to how God created us. Here's what God says right at the very beginning of creation. Genesis chapter 1 verses 26 to 27. Then God said, So here we are in the foundational passage of the Bible. We're only told two things about how God has created human beings. Did you see that? Two things. There's lots of things we could say about humanity, but there are two things we're told in the foundational passage in the Bible. You would imagine because this is the first and foundational chapter regarding creation, regarding the origin of the world, that what God says here is fundamental to our being, who we are. And he says two things.

He says we're created in the image of God, and he says we're created male and female. So there's sameness and there's difference. There's sameness. Men are created in the image of God. Women are created in the image of God. There's difference. We're created male and female. There's no notice. There's no hint of inferiority or superiority there in the text. In fact, in some ways, the creation narrative flies in the face of treating women as inferior to men. To mistreat, to undervalue women is to mistreat or to undervalue the image of God that they bear. It is just a sin against God. Misogyny is a sin.

[13 : 55] Men and women are created as man and woman. It's foundational to our humanity. We can't just kind of toss our gender aside, but we're created equal in worth and in dignity because we are created in the image of God. So that's the first thing. Secondly, this is even further expanded on with the coming of Jesus Christ and the advent of the gospel. Because here's what the apostle Paul says about our equality in Christ now as believers. Galatians chapter 3 verse 28. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

So any form of Christian teaching that says that men and women are not equal in value and dignity is not a biblical Christianity. It's just not. Any behavior then that undermines the value and the dignity of women is not biblical behavior. There's actually a ton of recent scholarship that points out that Paul, and this comes from Christian and non-Christian sources, but recent scholarship that points out that Paul's radical teaching in places like Galatians chapter 3 completely overturned the misogynistic and classist nature of much of the ancient world.

I actually don't think it's an overstatement to say that Paul's teachings on women, alongside what Christ did, have historically speaking probably been the single most powerful force in getting various cultures around the world to come to the conclusion that men and women are equal in worth and dignity. Without Christianity you don't get that. That's not what you get in lots of other cultures around the world without Christianity. That's the second thing. The third thing then, our inherent equality and worth and dignity is not necessarily undermined by the fact that men and women in some areas occupy different roles from each other. Now the most obvious example of this is childbearing. Only women can give birth to children. That restriction of role does not make them inferior or superior to men at what we might say at an ontological level, that is at the level of our being. So it does not follow, I think, it does not follow that the mere existence of certain fixed roles necessitates inferiority or superiority. That's really important. If God, in his wisdom, orders the church in such a way that only men can serve as elders, that doesn't necessitate then that women are then deemed to be kind of second-class members of the church or not have a voice in the church. And so bringing all three of those in together, the complementarian view is that men and women are created as men and women, equal in worth and in dignity, as image bearers, united together equally in Christ, but there are certain roles that each are called to in the church and in the home.

Obviously we're only looking at the church side today. Now on that base, with that kind of background in place, let's turn to 1 Timothy 3. So keep 1 Timothy 3 open in front of you. We read the whole chapter at the beginning of the service, but our focus is really on verses 11 to 15 and actually really on verses 12, or in verse 12, which is the key verse here. Paul writes this letter to his younger colleague Timothy, charging him to go to the church in the city of Ephesus to go and sort out what is actually a bit of a mess in the church. So as Paul had actually said several years earlier, false teachers had risen up inside of this church, particularly actually amongst the elders, and Timothy is instructed to go back and put all of this right. That's the big backdrop against which 1 Timothy is written. Now in chapter 2, most of the scholars on the subject across the board agree that Paul seems to be giving attention to what Christians do or shouldn't do in their public worship gatherings. You can see from how verse 1 starts,

I urge then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people. He's talking about what happens in worship gatherings. He goes down, he tells the men to pray without quarreling. It was quite a divisive church. Guys were praying and then fighting with each other afterwards. Haven't seen that happen yet, thank the Lord. He tells women not to dress in ostentatious ways, but to adorn themselves with good works rather than elaborate dress. And then in verse 11, he says this, a woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man. She must be quiet, for Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not the one deceived. It was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety.

[18:40] Now, given that the context is a worship service, a worship gathering, we have to ask the question, within that context, what is Paul prohibiting here? First, he says, a woman should learn in quietness and full of submission. Now, I know that straightaway you read that, in our modern context, you straightaway bristle at just hearing that alone. But already, Paul is actually being quite revolutionary, because there are numerous rabbinic schools around at the same time, as Paul is writing this, where only men are allowed to learn from the Torah. Women aren't even allowed to learn. So Paul is actually already pushing the envelope on female equality here. That word for quietness there could mean with a gentle demeanor, or it could quite literally mean in relative silence. It in large part depends on what you think the rest of the verses are saying.

And so we come to the actual prohibition then, which comes in verse 12. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man. She must be quiet.

The number of scholarly articles and books written on almost every single original Greek word in that sentence would be bigger than my library and my office upstairs.

And that's not an exaggeration. What we've seen, basically, in scholarship over the last three to four decades, is this kind of constant back and forth between complementarian and egalitarian scholars.

I obviously can't say everything. That's why we're going to do the Q&A, and that's why we're preaching longer this morning. But let me try and distill what I think is going on here. Paul is clearly prohibiting something concerning women, okay?

[20 : 20] The question is, what is this something? And then also, is it a once and for all prohibition for all women in all churches, or is it a kind of a temporary, contextual prohibition?

At face value, he's prohibiting women from teaching and having authority over men in the church. Instead, he says they must be silent. So let's start with what I think is actually the easiest part to sort out.

Is this verse saying that women can never say anything in a church service? Now, you probably know the answer to this question from my point of view, if you've been in our church services for any length of time. I think the biblical answer is an unequivocal no.

How do we know this? Well, in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, which is actually another tricky passage where Paul speaks about head coverings, that's altogether another sermon. That'll take me about an hour to do that one.

He fully, in that passage, he fully assumes that women will pray and prophesy in public worship because he instructs them on how to appropriately adorn themselves while they're praying and prophesying in public worship.

[21 : 29] So, clearly they were saying things in worship. We also know there were women prophets and that prophets would go from church to church gathering. Remember, these churches didn't have full Bibles yet in the first century.

Prophets would come and would share a word from the Lord in these gatherings and we know some of them were women. We know, for example, Philip had four daughters in Acts 29 who prophesied. So, whatever Paul means by the words, she must be quiet or keep silent, back in our passage, it cannot, cannot, cannot be a blanket ban on women speaking in worship services.

It must be something more specific than that. Now, to figure out the specific thing he's referencing, we have to look at the other two prohibitions. Teaching and having authority over men.

With teaching, this also can't be a blanket ban on women ever teaching, or even on women ever teaching men. So, in Titus chapter 2, for example, women are told to teach younger women.

So, there they're told to teach. In other places in the New Testament, Paul calls several women his co-laborers. People like Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4. Now, that's a term that he actually uses for people who are out and about with him evangelistically sharing the gospel and teaching about Christ in all sorts of informal gatherings.

[22 : 49] So, we know women taught in those contexts in the early church. We even know that women taught men. In Acts 18, we're told about Priscilla and Aquila, a husband and wife duo, taking aside a prominent disciple by the name of Apollos.

They'd heard Apollos preach the gospel. They thought, wow, this guy's really gifted, but there's a couple of doctrinal problems we need to sort out with him. So, they take him aside and the text says they explain to him the way of God more adequately. Now, the way that it's constructed in the original Greek there is that unusually Priscilla's name is in front of her husband's.

And so, most of the commentators agree that she seemed to take the role, the leading role in instructing Apollos there. So, there's an informal setting where a woman is teaching a man. So, what does Paul mean then?

What does he mean by teaching in 1 Timothy 2.12? Throughout 1 and 2 Timothy in the book of Titus, what we call the pastoral epistles, Paul uses teaching in a very technical, formal sense to refer to the passing on of the apostolic teachings about Jesus Christ.

Remember again, this is before Scripture is fully written down and compiled into a single volume Bible like we have today. In that environment, in order to guard against theological error and people just creating new teachings, Paul actually commissions Timothy to do something specific.

[24 : 13] In 2 Timothy 2, he says to Timothy, the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

So throughout 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and the book of Titus, Paul is talking about a specific type of formal teaching that is only entrusted to those qualified to teach others.

And remember again, our passage is within the context of a worship gathering. So it seems like the task of delivering the formal teaching within the worship service is the thing that's being forbidden to women here, not teaching in general.

But it's not just the teaching. Because if you look down, Paul says, I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority. There's a single word in the Greek there.

It's the word *authentio*. This word has probably caused more debate than any other word in the entire book. It only occurs once in the New Testament and only a handful of times in other documents from the same period.

[25 : 18] So it's a really difficult word to translate accurately. What some egalitarian scholars have done is they've said that the word should be understood negatively. So we should read domineer or usurp authority there.

And so they would say what Paul is doing is he's prohibiting women from unlawfully taking authority in the same way that he'd prohibit a man from unlawfully taking authority. Authority that's not rightfully his.

Now I've got to say as someone who has gotten a little bit lost in the weeds of all the studies on the semantic and the lexical range of this word *authentio*, I'm really just not persuaded that the word means much more than exercise authority with no negative connotation.

That is definitely the way that it was predominantly used by later Christians from the 4th century onwards where the word becomes much more common and they are our closest interpreters of the New Testament. Now again, is this a blanket ban on women ever having authority over men?

Are all women in all places at all times supposed to submit to men? And we haven't even talked about what submit would even be. And again, I have to say the answer is no. First of all, the context means this is not exercising authority over men within the worship service.

[26 : 40] Remember? Second, we have examples of women who exercise authority over men in all sorts of other environments. We have queens and judges in the Old Testament. We have a woman like Lydia in the New Testament who is a wealthy businesswoman over a large household.

What we know from Greco-Roman households is she would have had lots of male servants and slaves and even business associates in her household who would have been subject to her. She even hosts a church in her house. We see deacons, women deacons like Phoebe in Romans 16.

A deacon is a formal office with a level of authority attached to it. So this is not a blanket ban on women having authority over men. It's a ban on women exercising a particular kind of authority in the worship gathering that is also, because of where it's placed, closely related to this teaching role in the worship gathering.

And so I'm going to ask you just to employ common sense here. When you hear all of that, what does it sound like Paul is prohibiting? It sounds like Paul is prohibiting women from being elders.

Those who, as we saw last week, according to the rest of the New Testament, have governing authority and do the formal teaching and worship. In fact, even the flow of 1 Timothy is, I think, crystal clear on this.

[27 : 56] Remember, there are no chapter breaks in the original 1 Timothy. That's something we added on later to our Bibles. So straight after this prohibition, straight, straight after this prohibition, Paul says this in chapter 3 verse 1.

Here is a trustworthy saying. Whoever aspires to be an overseer or an elder desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.

It's almost like Paul is saying at the end of chapter 2, I do not permit a woman to teach and have authority in the worship gathering. Well then, who does have permission to teach and have authority in that context? Well, chapter 3, whoever aspires to be an overseer aspires a noble thing.

You see that flow? It's elders. The authority is in the name. They oversee. And what skill are they supposed to have that we saw last week?

They need to be able to teach. So from the context, it seems to me like a pretty watertight case that Paul has elders in mind when he prohibits women from teaching and having authority over men.

[29 : 05] He's essentially saying, ladies, I don't want you to function as elders. That role is reserved for certain qualified men. And remember, it's only a very, very, very small subset of men as well.

The vast majority of men are not qualified to serve as elders. Now someone might say, well, hang on, hang on, hang on. This is just one verse. It's possible that we're getting it wrong.

It's possible that there's some other contextual issue in the background regarding false teaching that was happening in the church and the women were kind of being caught up in that and in fact, we know some of the women were being caught up in it from later chapters.

And so that's why Paul is making some sort of temporary ban until the woman can be trained in good doctrine. He's not making a once and for all pronouncement. That woman can't be elders.

It's only one verse. Now that's a common rebuttal from egalitarians and in part, I agree with it. We need more corroborating evidence to be certain.

[30 : 03] Interestingly, we know men were being led astray as well by false teachers so it doesn't make sense that if the woman were being led astray that there's only a ban on the woman and not on the men. We know the men are named in the first chapter as going astray so why not a ban on men and just let the woman teach?

Surely that would have solved the problem in Ephesus. But I think they're right in that there's only one verse and we need more corroboration. But you know what? We have that.

We have another passage in Paul's writings where women are told to be silent within a worship gathering. It's in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 34 to 35. You can even go there if you want in your Bible.

1 Corinthians 14 34 to 35 Paul says women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak but must be in submission as the law says. If they want to inquire about something they should ask their own husbands at home for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

Now you read that and you think well maybe Paul actually is a little bit misogynistic. It's disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. But again context is king here.

[31 : 10] Remember early on 1 Corinthians chapter 11 I spoke about it a second ago Paul has already assumed that woman will publicly pray and prophesy in worship. So unless he's forgotten what he just wrote three chapters earlier or he's just a bumbling idiot he can't be talking about woman being completely silent in worship gatherings.

So what is he talking about? Well here are the verses that come directly preceding the section that we read. So 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 26 to 33.

This is what he says just before that section. He says what then shall we say brothers and sisters when you come together each of you has a hymn or a word of instruction a revelation a tongue or an interpretation so the context again is a worship gathering.

Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. If anyone speaks in a tongue two or at the most three should say speak one at a time and someone must interpret.

If there's no interpreter the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God. Two or three prophets should speak and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who's sitting down the first speaker should stop for you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.

[32 : 29] The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets for God is not a God of disorder but of peace as in all the congregations of the Lord's people. Now again it seems like we were touching on all sorts of other sermons we could be preaching but setting aside what exactly tongues and prophecy is here you can clearly see here that the prophets came into these gatherings and they pronounced words from the Lord and then those prophecies were then judged by others.

That's what the text says there. It says others should carefully weigh up what has been said. The original word there is a word for sifting that is taking out the good of what the prophet has said and discarding the stuff that you don't think you need.

Now let me ask you who in the local church do you think is qualified to do that weighing up of the prophecies that sifting? I think elders are. In fact we know that that's exactly the way that first century synagogues worked.

The elders sat in the front row and they weighed up the teachings of the visiting speakers. And so in the very next verse then after regulating prophecy in the worship gathering Paul says women should remain silent in the churches.

Why would he say that if he's already assumed that they can pray and they can prophesy in the gathering? Well he's saying it because they're not elders. They can pray they can prophesy but they can't weigh up the prophecies because that is the exclusive task of the elders.

[34 : 02] In fact they go so far to say the implication is the other men can't weigh up those prophecies either. So the two places in the New Testament where women are told to be silent are the two places where it seems the task of elders is in view.

That is surely not coincidence. Paul is not telling women they can't ever speak in worship gatherings he's telling us that the office of elder I think is reserved for certain qualified men only.

Now why? If Paul is prohibiting women from being elders and having the teaching and authoritative role that elders have why is he doing it? Is it because women are inferior to men?

It cannot be that because of what we've seen in the rest of the Bible. Is it because men are inherently better teachers than women? Well there's no evidence of that in the Bible.

In fact women are told to teach children. Would we want inferior teachers teaching our children? Spiritual gifts are not gender specific. What reason does Paul give for the why here?

[35 : 16] We'll look at 1 Timothy 2 again. Verse 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man. She must be quiet. For, and here comes the reason, Adam was formed first, then Eve and Adam was not the one deceived it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

But women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith, love and propriety. He gives two reasons.

Adam was formed first and Eve was the one deceived. Those are the two reasons he gives. Now by Paul appealing to creation I think it actually further underlines that this prohibition is not just some sort of temporary contextual prohibition for the church in Ephesus but rather a universal command for all churches.

Often when Jesus or when Paul want to ground certain theological truths they appeal to creation. They appeal to the foundations to say look this is the way God created and set up this world.

But what about the creation underlines Paul's command here? At face value it might look like Paul is saying that in creation there's a hierarchy.

[36 : 32] Adam was formed first and that there's also an inferiority in Eve. She was the one deceived. maybe women are more easily deceived than men and so that's why men should be elders. Friends that's not what Paul is saying.

First of all we've already seen that there actually isn't a hierarchy of being in the creation. So Adam and Eve are both created in the image of God. They are both given the cultural mandate to multiply and to rule over the creation.

There isn't a hierarchy in being but there is an order in roles. So right from the creation of the days through to the special creation of Adam and Eve the Genesis text you might have noticed when you read it is very very focused on order.

So Adam is created first as servant leader in this marriage relationship and then Eve is created you would have noticed from his side I know some of the translations say rib but it really is side from his side not his head symbolizing superiority not from his feet symbolizing inferiority from his side so there's no hierarchy of being Adam is not ontologically above Eve but there is order.

Adam comes before Eve and is her servant leader and it's exactly the same then with the deception. It's not that Eve is more sinful or more easily deceived it's that the serpent reverses the order and he goes to Eve first and he deceives her and then she gives the fruit to Adam who should have stopped the serpent but instead he just kind of goes along with it and he eats it and so the order is reversed.

[38 : 08] Adam was created to be the servant leader of his wife that is the way God has ordered marriage that's what Paul will later tell us in Corinthians and in Ephesians 5 Adam's servant leadership is not a sign of his superiority it's just a pattern of an ordering but the serpent reverses the order and Adam fails to exercise his servant leadership and protect his wife and then sin enters into the world.

Tom Schreiner who's probably one of the greatest living Bible scholars says this he says in approaching Eve the serpent subverted the pattern of male leadership and interacted only with Eve during the temptation Adam was present throughout and did not intervene the Genesis temptation therefore is indicative of what happens when male leadership is abrogated Eve took the initiative in responding to the serpent and Adam let her do so thus the appeal to Genesis 3 serves as a reminder of what happens when God's ordained pattern is undermined that's the basis Paul says for why he doesn't permit women to teach or have authority over men in this specific context now I'm fully just as an aside I'm fully aware that there's still verse 15 women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith love holiness and propriety in some ways that's actually the hardest verse to figure out in this section I have some thoughts and so you can ask me about that in the Q&A; I don't in fact think that it just because it is a by virtue of the fact that it is a difficult verse it nullifies any of the stuff we've already said about verses 12 to 14 but for the sake of time

I'm going to skip it and you can ask about it in the Q&A; and I'm going to close by asking one big question why why would God order his church so we know why Paul says we should do this but why would God do this in the big picture why would he make men the elders and not women it's a question I've asked myself over and over and over again listen friends I pastor a church in the city center of Cape Town it would be so much easier for me if these verses were not in the Bible I could double the number of elders we could double the number of church blunders we sent out overnight this is a question I've asked myself several times why would God do it this way and in some ways I'm not sure we'll ever fully answer this question and part of robust faith is trusting in scripture even when we can't understand all the motivations behind a particular command even if that command offends us Tim Keller used to say that if the God of the Bible never offends you then you probably don't believe in the true God of the Bible you rather you believe in a

God that you've created yourself and superimposed onto the text of the Bible but why would God set things up this way let me offer you my thoughts on this question Adam didn't crush the serpent he allowed his wife to be deceived and the world was plunged into darkness in Genesis 3 and the curses that are then pronounced following that fall we get this one kind of cryptic verse God says to Eve in the curses he says your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you now that verse has had almost as much ink spilled over it as 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 12 but I think that one of the things most of the commentators have consensus on there regarding that verse is that it is saying that relations between the genders between male and female between husband and wife are going to be fraught with difficulty now that sin has entered this world now there's going to be abuse now there's going to be misogyny now there's going to be manipulation there's still going to be relationship between man and woman but what was once a thing of pure innocent beauty is now horribly fractured by sin and that's exactly what we've seen that's what we've seen in history abuse misogyny women having to turn to sex for manipulation and to gain power to wield power all because

Adam didn't crush the serpent as the servant leader but here's what the apostle Paul says to this tragedy Romans 5 15 if the many died by the trespass of the one man Adam how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ overflow to the many you see Adam the servant leader in the garden failed to crush the serpent but Christ our servant leader in the garden of Gethsemane prays to his father and says not my will but your will be done and he gets up and he goes to the cross and he bleeds and he dies and he crushes the head of the serpent once and for all he didn't let us stay in our poor estate as deceived sinners like Adam did with his wife he stepped in front of the venomous serpent and brought his heel crushingly down on its head and that's exactly what

[43 : 19] Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 said would happen God curses the serpent and says I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers he will crush your head and you will strike his heel Christ crushes the head of the venomous serpent and in so doing he struck on the heel and he gives up his life see friends Jesus is the sacrificial leader we need he's the leader we need it is only through his sacrifice through his sacrificial example his shed blood his atoning work his offer of forgiveness for all of us and it's only through that that we're ever ever ever going to find the power going to find the motivation to overcome this fraught relationship that the fall has brought about between man and woman that's the only place we fix it we don't fix it through western egalitarianism we don't even fix it through feminism even though I have sympathies with many parts of feminism we fix it through the sacrificial servant leader it's only the king who exercises authority by laying down his life that we will find hope to overcome abusive power in gender relations it is only in the one who allows himself to be beaten for our sakes that we will find the resources to vanquish the physical abuse that is meted out to women by sinful men and then give hope and healing to the women who have been on the receiving end of that see friends if men if men could model their sacrificial savior then we would have a world free from misogyny free from abuse if only men would be like the second

Adam and not like the first Adam then we would see the flourishing of man and woman together in all of the beauty that they were created for and so I think God in his wisdom has placed male elders and husbands in this sacrificial leadership role to model that gospel when we do not behave in sacrificial life giving ways towards the woman we pastor towards the woman we are married to then we forfeit our sacred calling and we bring shame and disgrace to the gospel I used to feel shame about this particular doctrine I used to be embarrassed that the bible taught male only eldership I believed it because it seemed pretty clear in the text but I believed it reluctantly that is no longer the case for me I'm no longer ashamed I think this is a beautiful beautiful life giving doctrine

I think the lord in his great wisdom has set up the church in such a way as to magnify his gospel his sacrificial lamb of a son and restore broken people and we violate then this pattern to our own peril I'm going to leave it there let me pray our father our God we want to submit ourselves to your word but we also want to know what your word actually teaches and doesn't teach lord we don't want to submit ourselves to wrong things and so this is a big wrestle this is a difficult thing it's a difficult doctrine to get our heads and our hearts around when we've been raised in a culture that says that shouldn't be the way there should be absolutely no restrictions on roles amongst the genders and so I ask that you by your spirit would lead us into truth here if what was said this morning from this pulpit was error then won't you take it out of the hearts and the minds of the people make it clear to us that we are in error but if what is said this morning is truth then I pray that you will give us the heart man and woman to submit to this calling that you have set up in your church we ask for your help lord we ask us we ask that you let us get a clear clear vision of our servant leader in the garden our lord jesus christ sweating drops of blood asking his father to take the cup away but then saying not my will but thy will be done we ask that you give us a clear vision of his saving sacrificial work on our behalf as he crushes the serpent once and for all bringing hope and restoration and healing have mercy on us as we cling to christ for our everything lord we pray and may our relations between male and female in this church display the glory of that gospel to a watching world we ask this for christ's sake amen we listen to as you can't ask thisication shine