

*Why Women Read Scripture in Public Worship at Christ Community Church*

At Christ Community Church we allow for women to participate in the public reading of Scripture because we believe that this expression is an appropriate role for women to play in a public church service. Furthermore it is a wise use of an individual woman's talents and skills and most importantly not in violation with any teaching of Scripture. Perhaps, most would agree with this statement and no further explanation is necessary however, for some 1 Timothy 2:8-15 would seem to contradict our stance. Therefore, the following position statement is intended to be brief explanation of why we think this is an appropriate practice and not a full exegesis of the text in 1 Timothy 2.

To begin with, it is important to acknowledge the hermeneutical principle that we employ in interpreting this text and that is the principle of 'cultural transposition'. In essence we determine within the text that which is God's essential revelation (which is changeless) and its cultural expression (which is changeable). As John Stott says when we engage in the principle of "cultural transposition" we are then in the position to preserve the former and universal and free to adapt or 'transpose' the later into another contemporary form. So, for example, when Jesus says in John 13 that he has given his disciples an example to follow and that they should go and do likewise we do not interpret this to mean that every one of us should go around washing people's feet. Rather we discern what is intrinsic in the meaning of the text (that no menial task should be above the disciples of Christ if we love one another) and then transpose it into realities of today (so we gladly wash

the dishes or clean toilets). Understanding this is important because it is this principle that is at play in understanding 1 Timothy 2:8-15

We believe we see this very dynamic in the early section of the text in verses 8-10. Paul's command for men everywhere to pray, lifting holy hands, is not imposed upon modern male Christians today anymore than modern female believers are chastised for braiding their hair or wearing gold or pearls. The point is we intuitively make the distinction between the universal/ethical and the cultural/temporal even if grammatically nothing in the text indicates this distinction.

For men putting aside anger and pursuing holiness is universally right while lifting up one's hands in prayer is a cultural expression of that universal truth. For women, being modest and decent are universally right while hairstyles and jewelry are merely cultural expressions of this fact. It seems to be appropriate then to see the prohibitions and commands of vv. 11-12 in the same light; that is, that there are universal truths being expressed a particular cultural context. It is clear by verse 13, and 1 Corinthians 11, that Paul does not intend to undo the creational structure of the male/female relationship (that of headship and submission) but what is not so clear is that women being silent and not teaching is apart of that fundamental creational structure.

Could it be that a woman remaining silent is similar in nature to women being commanded to wear veils as a cultural sign of submission and not a universal command (1 Cor 11:10)? If so, than this gives women wider latitude to serve in various ministry capacities, if not, than why shouldn't women be commanded to wear veils in our churches today?

Furthermore teaching is not a singularly defined exercise. For example the public prophesying of women was not regarded as an improper exercise of authority over men in 1 Cor 11:5 or in Acts 2:17, 21:9 presumably because it took place under the direct inspiration and authority of God. Neither was Priscilla's teaching of Apollo's considered inappropriate perhaps because it was done in private however, this exception is moot since Paul's apparent prohibition in 1 Tim 2 does not qualify the context of the teaching, but more than likely since her instruction was still under the headship of her husband, Aquila who was present.

Lastly, the point must be made that the public reading of Scripture is not principally in the apostle's mind in 1 Tim 2:11-12. While good reading is an interpretive act that *can* be a form of teaching it is not teaching in a direct sense and therefore would not qualify as the form of teaching that Paul intends throughout the pastoral epistles and in particular 1 Tim 2:11-12. It is the view of the elders of Christ Community Church that the regular, public exposition of Scripture is the responsibility of the elders of the church and that the office of an elder is restricted to males. Therefore, women will not be preaching from the pulpit of Christ Community Church.

There is more that can be said on this topic but this brief position statement is enough to state that while we hold strongly to a complimentary view of men's and women's roles in the church there is enough latitude given us in the interpretation of this text to allow women in the public reading of Scripture.