

Taking a closer look at 1 Timothy 2:12
Examining the Controversy of 1 Timothy 2:12: Part 4

But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. (1 Tim 2:12)

1. Study carefully the prohibitions that Paul states in 1 Timothy 2:12. Is the present tense use of the term “permit” significant? What does the term “teach” mean? Is the term “man” used generically or specifically? What does the term “authority” mean? Is this verse really about husbands and wives?

“Permit”

Paul’s uses this term in the present tense. Some scholars believe that the use of the present tense limits Paul’s prohibition to a temporary injunction; thus, they see the term “permit” as “I am not presently allowing.”

However the tense alone of the verb “permit” is far inadequate to draw such a conclusion. What is certain is that Paul, at the time of writing, was authoritatively commanding these prohibitions. Whether the prohibition is temporary or permanent can only be determined by the context of the passage. Examine the following examples of how context determines whether the subject of the verb is temporary or not:

Another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, **permit** me first to go and bury my father." (Matt 8:21) The present tense of this verb refers to a temporary subject: the burial of a loved one.

Therefore I **urge** you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom 12:1) The present tense of this verb refers to a perpetual endeavor: the pursuit of holiness.

The present tense of the verb “permit” is insufficient to conclude that Paul’s prohibition of women from teaching Christian doctrine to men or having authority over them in the church is temporary.

“Teach”

While the term “teach” may be applied to a wide range of subjects, Paul has used the terms “teach, teaching, and teacher” throughout his epistles to refer to **authoritative doctrinal instruction**. He never used the term to mean as an application to all subjects. Without any written texts, the early church was susceptible to false teaching and Paul’s first letter to Timothy reflected his concerns.

If service, in his serving; or he who **teaches**, in his **teaching**; (Rom 12:7)

Prescribe and **teach** these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and **teaching**. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your **teaching**; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. (1 Tim 4:11-16)

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to **teach** others also. (2 Tim 2:2)

Timothy was deeply concerned with sound doctrinal teaching, and the dynamic equivalent to today would be the function of preaching and perhaps Bible studies.

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“Man”

Without any context, the Greek term “aner” can be translated as “man” or “husband.” The translation is significant, because Paul is either prohibiting women from teaching or exercising authority over *men* or prohibiting wives from teaching or exercising authority over their *husbands*. In the case of 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul uses the Greek term “aner” without any definite article, personal pronoun, qualifying adjectives, or literary context to a marriage relationship.

The evidence that clearly favors the translation of “man” in the general sense in 1 Timothy 2:12 is born from a study in Greek grammar. Throughout his epistles, Paul usually signals “husband” for the Greek term “aner” in one of three ways:

a) Paul would precede the term “aner” with a definite article. This can be thought of as similar to the English term “the”.

While Greek does not have an indefinite article, the definite article functions to point out the object of the sentence or draw attention to it. Its presence always makes an object definite. However, when it is not used, the object may or may not be definite.

Thus, when Paul used a definite article with “aner,” Paul is giving the term “aner” a sense of identity or individuality rendering the translation of “aner” to husband.

The following verses are examples where Paul preceded the term “aner” with a definite article rendering the translation “husband.” In cases where the definite article is missing, the context of the verse leaves little doubt that the translation should be “husband”. The abbreviation “**DA**” indicates the presence of a definitive article with the term “aner.” The abbreviation “**C**” indicates that the translation of “husband” is based solely on the context of the verse and not on any grammatical cues.

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Sometimes the definite article may be used in an interesting manner. In this instance, a definite article precedes the term “aner,” yet the term is still translated as “man” instead of “husband.”

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, the grammatical structure uses the definite article to maintain the Hebrew poetic device of parallelism. In Greek, 1 Corinthians 11:3 would read “But I want you to understand that **the** Christ is the head of every man, and **the** man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 11:9 would read “for indeed man was not created for **the** woman's sake, but woman for **the** man's sake.”

The following verses represent the poetic use of the definitive article. The abbreviation “**PP**” indicates the presence of a personal pronoun before the term “aner”.

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When a definite article is absent, the noun may be understood in a generic sense or understood in a qualitative sense where there is an emphasis on the quality or character of the noun.

As an example of a generic translation, these verses translate the term “aner” as “man” in the generic sense.

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As an example of the qualitative translation, these verses stress the quality of the term “aner.” The quality “one woman kind of man” is stressed in 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6. The quality of “to be husband lovers” is stressed in Titus 2:4. Hence, in these verses, “aner” is translated as “husband.”

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b) Sometimes Paul would precede the term “aner” with a possessive pronoun. In this case, “aner” is always translated as “husband.” Examples of this can be seen below. The abbreviation “**PP**” indicates the presence of a personal pronoun before the term “aner”.

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c) In other instances, Paul would be referring “aner” as “husband” when he is speaking within the context of a husband – wife relationship as exemplified earlier in 1 Corinthians 7:10.

In the case of 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul precedes verse 12 with an exhortation to the men and women members of the church, in a generic sense, in how they are to pray and dress. Since the exhortation is not within the context of a marriage, and Paul’s grammar and syntax does not change the object, man, it’s not possible for Paul to refer to a husband and wife family unit just as he begins to speak about teaching and authority.

Based on the grammatical structure of 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul is placing a prohibition that applies to all women in their relationship with men within the church.

“Exercise authority”

Because the Greek term for “authority” (*authentein*) is a hapax legomena, a term used once in the New Testament, scholars have debated what Paul intended as its meaning. Some scholars believe, according to their etymological studies, that “authentein” means “murderer” or “suicide.”

However, extensive lexical studies of extra-biblical literature, such as church fathers of the first and second century, found that the term “authentein” was used to mean “to rule, have dominion over, to have primacy, authority, and power.”

The implication, according to Paul’s prohibition, is that a woman is not to have any authority over a man within the church’s ecclesiastical community. Thus, in the ecclesiastical structure established by Paul where the governing or ruling entity of the church is the elders (1 Tim 3:5; 5:17), women are prohibited from being a member of that governing body.

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2. In examining the Greek terms in 1 Timothy 2:12, “But I do not allow a woman to teach (*didasko*) or (*oude*) exercise authority (*authentein*) over a man, but to remain quiet,” did Paul use the conjunction “oude” to refer the verbs, “teaching” and “exercising authority,” as two distinct activities or as one? Is Paul instead only prohibiting women from “teaching authoritatively” as a teaching elder? Is there a distinction between “authoritative teaching” and “non-authoritative teaching”? Does this mean that women may teach “non-authoritatively,” as long as they are not an elder, to others including men?

Proponents for the one activity view believe that the two verbs “teaching” and “exercising authority” should be taken together. They interpret the Greek conjunction “oude” as a “hendiadys,” which is a grammatical relationship that modifies the second verb (into an adverb) so that Paul is making only one prohibition “teaching authoritatively.”

However, in all the instances where “oude” occurs in the New Testament, not one functions as a hendiadys. The one activity view requires an interpretation of the syntax foreign to the range of known usage and understanding of “oude”; there is no textual evidence for interpreting “oude” as a hendiadys.

The grammatical evidence supports overwhelmingly that Paul used “oude” to join two distinct concepts – in this case two activities. Sometimes Paul uses “oude” to join contrasting concepts such as his use of Galatians 3:28, “Gentile and (*oude*) Jew, slave and (*oude*) free.”

Furthermore, Paul uses the term “teach” (*didasko*) to refer to exclusively teaching authoritative doctrinal instruction whether one is a church elder or not. In Paul’s mind, he sees no distinction between “authoritative teaching” and “non-authoritative teaching.”

Thus Paul prohibits women from engaging in either activity towards men in the ecclesiastical setting. Paul explicitly limits the role of teaching authoritative doctrinal instruction and leadership of the church assembly to men.

Is there a biblical basis for allowing a woman to teach to the church assembly under the leadership of male elders? Because “oude” cannot be interpreted as a hendiadys, there is no other biblical evidence for a woman to teach men authoritative doctrinal instruction under the leadership of male elders.

Paul prohibitions on women are clear and authoritative.

They are permanent for the function and structure of the church.

They restrict two distinct activities towards men.

They pertain to the role and function that God had of men and women, not simply husbands and wives.

References:

1. Piper, J, Grudem, W, eds, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books (1991), p.179-193.

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The following verses are examples where Paul preceded the term "aner" with a definite article rendering the translation "husband." In cases where the definite article is missing, the context of the verse leaves little doubt that the translation should be "husband". The abbreviation "DA" indicates the presence of a definitive article with the term "aner." The abbreviation "C" indicates that the translation of "husband" is based solely on the context of the verse and not on any grammatical cues.

Rom 7:2 For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband .	DA DA DA
1 Cor 7:3 The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband .	DA DA
1 Cor 7:4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.	DA DA
1 Cor 7:10 But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband	C
1 Cor 7:11 (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.	DA C
1 Cor 7:13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband , and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.	C DA
1 Cor 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband ; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.	DA DA
1 Cor 7:16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband ? Or how do you know, O husband , whether you will save your wife?	DA C
1 Cor 7:34 and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband .	DA
1 Cor 7:39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.	DA DA
Gal 4:27 For it is written, "REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR; BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR; FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND ."	DA
Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.	C
Eph 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.	DA
Eph 5:25 Husbands , love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,	DA
Eph 5:33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband .	DA
Col 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands , as is fitting in the Lord.	DA
Col 3:19 Husbands , love your wives and do not be embittered against them.	DA

The following verses represent the poetic use of the definitive article. The abbreviation "PP" indicates the presence of a personal pronoun before the term "aner".

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man , and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.	N DA PP
1 Cor 11:9 for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.	N DA

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As an example when the definitive article is absent, these verses translate the term “aner” as “man” in the generic sense.

Rom 7:3 So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man , she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man .	DA N DA N
1 Cor 11:7 For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man .	N N
1 Cor 11:8 For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man ;	N N
1 Cor 11:11 However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man , nor is man independent of woman.	N N
1 Tim 2:12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man , but to remain quiet.	N

As an example of the qualitative translation, these verses stress the quality of the term “aner.” The quality “one woman kind of man” is stressed in 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6. The quality of “to be husband lovers” is stressed in Titus 2:4. Hence, in these verses, “aner” is translated as “husband.”

1 Tim 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,	N
1 Tim 3:12 Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.	N
Tit 1:6 namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.	N N
Tit 2:4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands , to love their children,	N

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1 Cor 7:2 But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband .	N DA PP
1 Cor 14:35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.	DA PP
2 Cor 11:2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband , so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.	PP
Eph 5:22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands , as to the Lord.	PP
Tit 2:5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands , so that the word of God will not be dishonored.	DA PP

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