



# Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

Volume XX

May 2000

Number 10

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE FAITH: AN EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF FIRST TIMOTHY 2:8-15 [PART 1]

By

Brian R. Kenyon

The role of women is a very controversial topic in the religious world today, the church of Christ included. An example of this is found in the March 2000 *Harvester*, wherein the editor evaluated a letter from the elders of a church of Christ stating their reasons for “expanding the role of women.” When dealing with this, or any other subject, all must realize that the Scriptures are always right (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Contrary to popular opinion, the Bible is not “anti” women. The Bible holds women in the highest esteem (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:15; Mt. 1:3, 5; 1 Cor. 7:3-4; Heb. 11:11, 31, 35; Jas. 2:25). In fact, some have suggested that this point alone can prove the Inspiration of the Bible (i.e. men would never elevate women as the Bible does if they merely wrote from their own cultural background). In the opinion of this writer, First Timothy 2:8-15 is the most comprehensive passage in the Bible dealing with the role of women in the faith. It is therefore profitable for all to study this passage seriously if they are to ascertain the truth on the role of women. In the two parts of this article, emphasis will be placed on what the text teaches and the application of its principles to the church of Christ today. Note what

this passage teaches.

### Men Are to Lead

*I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting* (1 Tim. 2:8). “Men” is from a Greek word (ἀνήρ) which specifies “man (male).”<sup>1</sup> With reference to gender, the word is used to distinguish a man from a woman (Acts 8:12; 17:12; 1 Tim. 2:12), or to identify a husband, as opposed to another man (Mt. 1:16; Jn. 4:16). With reference to age, the word is used to distinguish a boy from an adult man (Mt. 14:21; 15:38). God’s will is that faithful males pray, not just in the assembly, but everywhere! Obviously, this does not absolutely forbid women from praying in the presence of others. Women may lead prayers in the presence of other women and/or children (cf. Acts 16:13-14), but whenever men are present, God wills that the men lead in matters of worship. “Pray” (from προσεύχομαι) primarily refers to prayer, but may be considered inclusive of the broader concept of worship in general. Some have taken Paul’s “I will” to mean that this is merely Paul’s opinion, but all who read must realize that Paul is an inspired apostle, and thus communicates God’s will (1 Cor.

14:37).

Not just any male is to lead in prayer (or in worship), but God wills for “holy” men to take this role. “Lifting up...hands” is a figure of speech in which posture is placed for prayer itself (cf. Ps. 143:6; Lam. 3:41; Isa. 1:15). This does not suggest that one is more “holy” because he lifts up his hands, nor does this verse authorize the entire congregation to lift their hands and sway back and forth in emotional theatrics (cf. Col. 3:17). Worship acts are to be accompanied by a spiritual and holy life. If Paul were addressing the typical 21st century American church, he might say something like, “I want men to bow holy heads.” These men are to be without “wrath and doubting” (i.e. anger and argument) because this will render prayer ineffective (Jas. 5:16 cf. Isa. 1:15). God wills that holy men lead in matters of worship!

### Women

#### Are To Be In Subjection

*In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all*

*subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence* (1 Tim. 2:9-12).

Note the contrast: males are to worship by providing holy leadership and women are to worship by allowing the men to lead (i.e. be in subjection) (2:9). Males are to pray, females are to dress (which here primarily refers to their behavior). In the first century, women tended to overdress (cf. 1 Pet. 3:3); men tended to quarrel. Thus, men needed to be admonished to be spiritual leaders; women needed to be urged to be subordinate followers. Women must “adorn themselves” in appropriate clothes (i.e. in good taste). “Modest apparel” is that which does not illicit undue attention nor accentuate lewd or suggestive impulses. “Modest” is from a word (κοσμίος) which means respectable, honorable;<sup>2</sup> in good taste.<sup>3</sup> The Greek word occurs again only in 1 Tim. 3:2, where it is translated “of good behavior.” It reflects a moral sense of decency that shuns all that is improper or dishonorable. “Shamefacedness [propriety NKJ; decency NIV ¶]” (from αἰδώς) refers to modesty (as used here), reverence, respect.<sup>5</sup> The only other occurrence of this Greek word is in Heb. 12:28 (“reverence”). “Sobriety [moderation NKJ; propriety NIV]” (from σωφροσύνη) means reasonableness, rationality, mental soundness (Acts 26:25, “sobriety”); good judgement, moderation, self control (1 Tim. 2:9, 15).<sup>6</sup> Elaborate gaudy dress promotes the opposite of a submissive spirit — it draws attention to self rather than God (so also with not enough clothes).

Rather than dressing to receive excessive attention given to physical adornment, women are to dress themselves with good works (2:10 cf. 5:10). As male prayers are to come from holy lives, so female

dress is to come from godly living (cf. Prov. 31:30). Women who claim to be God-worshippers ought to dress and act as such. Women are to learn in silence and subjection (2:11). “Silence [quietness ASV, NIV]” is from a Greek word (ἡσυχία) which means quietness, restfulness, gentleness. It is a disposition that underlies action. This cannot refer to absolute silence in the assembly, for women (as well as men) are to speak in song (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Rather, it conveys the idea of submissiveness. “All subjection [full submission NIV]” (from ὑποταγή) carries the idea of readiness to renounce one’s will for the sake of others. This is not to suggest an inferiority / superiority relationship between men and women (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3). The issue is willingness to fit oneself into the arrangement of God!

Women are not to be in positions of authority in a worship service where men are present (2:12). Women are not prohibited from teaching (cf. Tit. 2:3-5; 2 Tim. 1:5), but they must respect God’s pattern of male leadership. “Usurp authority [have dominion ASV; have authority over NIV; exercise authority NAS]” comes from a Greek word (ἀυθεντέω) which appears only this one time in the NT. The word means to have authority, domineer.<sup>7</sup> The KJV translation (“usurp authority”) may leave the wrong impression. “Usurp” in English implies the idea of seizing by force. However, the Greek word (as evidenced in the translations cited above and the total teaching of the Bible) indicates that it does not matter whether the woman is given authority from another man (even an elder or eldership) or whether she seizes the authority herself, she is NOT to have it! Public teaching is one type of authoritative position over men that women are not to have. Women

may teach in conversational situations, and they may teach other women or children (Tit. 2:3-5 cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Note the contrasts with verse 11: “learning in silence” in contrast to “being a teacher” and “all subjection” in contrast to “usurping authority.” (To be continued.)

### Endnotes

1. Joseph H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1885; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975) 45.
2. Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 2nd rev. ed. by William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 455.
3. Max Zerwick, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament, Mary Grosvenor trans. (1966; Rome, Italy: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993) 629.
4. The author’s comparative use of the NIV is not his endorsement of the entire translation.
5. Bauer 22.
6. Bauer 802.
7. Bauer 121.

### Extension Classes Schedule

For additional information see Page 4 for the phone numbers for the individual classes. Each class will be a different location. If additional information contact the office.

*The Harvesters*  
 Published Monthly  
 Florida School of Preaching  
 1807 South Florida Avenue  
 Lakeland, Florida 33803  
 (863) 683-4043  
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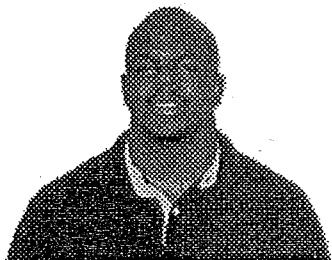
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## Those Completing Studies in May



Thornton M. Brown

Thornton is from Fort Myers, Florida. He was a member of the Palmetto Avenue congregation. He is not married and plans to further his education by attending the Jacksonville Community College in Jacksonville, Florida. While doing so, he will be working with Charlie McClendon and the North Side congregation in Jacksonville.



Bobby L. Green, Jr.

Bobby is married and has two children. His wife has attended some classes with him. Bobby came from the West Orlando congregation. He would like to continue his education and seeks a congregation that will enable him to serve while providing for his family.



Tommy L. Faulk

Tommy is married and has four children. He is from Montgomery, Alabama. Tommy has attended the school for a number of years. He began taking classes part time while working a secular job. He preaches for the Preston Street congregation in Auburndale. He plans to continue with this congregation.



Yvon Pierre

Yvon is married and has two children. He is a native of Haiti and plans to return there to preach. His pressing need at the present is to find a sponsoring congregation that will assist him when he returns to establish a congregation in his homeland. We believe Yvon to be worthy of your support.

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## Lectureship News

The schedule of speakers and assigned topics are finished. We believe the 2001 Lectureship is one that you will want to attend. The theme: "DO YOU UNDERSTAND LEADERSHIP?" is certainly a worthy subject. The afternoon forums will help to focus the issue and provide insight to this timely study. Monday: Potential Difficulties—No Elders; Tuesday: Potential Difficulties—the Role of Women; Wednesday: Potential Difficulties—False Teachers; Thursday: Potential Difficulties—Encouraging Leaders. JANUARY 15-18, 2001 are the dates.

# Extension Classes 2000-2001

Evenings, 7:00 to 9:30

## Auburndale

Orange Street Church of Christ Building

Thursday (863-682-1248)

Fall 2000: First and Second Corinthians 11335 ..... J. H. Blackman, Jr.

Spring 2001: First and Second Thessalonians 22337 ..... J. H. Blackman, Jr.

## Bushnell

Bushnell Church of Christ Building

Tuesday (863-683-4043)

Fall 2000: Romans 21361 ..... Jackie Stearsman

Spring 2001: Minor Prophets 22345 ..... Jackie Stearsman

## High Springs

High Springs Church of Christ Building

Monday (904-454-2930)

Fall 2000: First and Second Corinthians 11335 ..... Gene Burgett

Spring 2001: Old Testament History 22339 ..... Gene Burgett

## Jacksonville

Wescosnett Church of Christ Building

Thursday (904-771-5075)

Fall 2000: Christian Evidences 21344 ..... Steve Atnip

Spring 2001: Matthew 32389 ..... Mark Mosher

## Orlando

South Seminole Church of Christ Building

Tuesday (407-657-0657)

Fall 2000: Biblical Eschatology 31376 ..... Timothy Kidwell

Spring 2001: Minor Prophets 22345 ..... Timothy Kidwell

## Sarasota

Midway Church of Christ Building

Monday (941-355-6785)

Fall 2000: Life of Christ 11317 ..... Gene Stilwell

Spring 2001: Scheme of Redemption 12319 ..... Gene Stilwell

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