

Women Serving God: A Study Guide

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Primary Resource:

**John Mark Hicks, *Women Serving God:
My Journey in Understanding That Story in the Bible***

Available here: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08CRMCIJT>

INTRODUCTION

This study guide offers a plan to facilitate a class or group discussion of my book *Women Serving God: My Journey in Understanding that Story in the Bible*.

I suggest eight weeks of lessons. These cover the main themes of the book and provide an opportunity to discuss the book and explore the biblical texts involved. Each lesson contains (1) a biblical text(s) upon which to focus; (2) a focus statement that identifies the purpose of the lesson, (3) a suggested teaching outline to cover the topic for that week, (4) several questions for discussion as a group, and (5) identification of the relevant pages in *Women Serving God* as well as additional resources in order to explore the topic further.

While I divide the study guide into eight lessons, one may easily extend it to thirteen or less if so desired. Below is a 13-week suggestion, but other organizations of the material are possible. For example, some may want to spend two lessons on 1 Timothy 2 and contract two other lessons into one (e.g., 2 & 3 by telling the history concluding with *Woman's Role in the Church*).

- (1) *My Experience and Yours*: what is the experience of the group in their history and present circumstances in relation to the participation of women in the assembly or in the life of the church? (First half of Part 1.)
- (2) *Woman's Role in the Church*: an exploration of the case presented for traditional practices among churches of Christ. (Second half of Part 1.)
- (3) *Historical Perspective*: the history of the practice and discussions among churches of Christ concerning women in the assembly and elsewhere in the community. (First half of Part 2.)
- (4) *Hermeneutical Challenges*: discussion of the cultural and interpretative problems associated with reading the Bible well. (First section of Part 1; second half of Part 2.)
- (5) *Gifts in the Assembly*: discussion of 1 Corinthians 14. (First half of Part 3.)
- (6) *Authority to Pray and Prophecy*: discussion of 1 Corinthians 11. (Second half of Part 3.)
- (7) *Pouring out of the Spirit*: discussion of the significance of Pentecost in Acts 2 (First half of Part 4.)
- (8) *New Creation*: discussion of Galatians 3:28 and its implications. (Second half of Part 4.)
- (9) *The Creation*: discussion of Genesis 1-3. (First section in Part 5.)
- (10) *Women in Israel*: discussion of the story of women from Miriam to Esther. (Second section in Part 5.)
- (11) *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*: discussion of the ministry of Jesus and women. (Third section in Part 5.)
- (12) *One Another Ministry*: discussion of Romans 12, 16 and the ministry of women. (Fourth section in Part 5.)
- (13) *My Firewall*: discussion of 1 Timothy 2:8-15. (Part 6.)

Each lesson assumes the teacher or facilitator is reading *Women Serving God*. The study guide organizes material for a class, provides discussion questions, and suggests specific resources.

I hope teachers or facilitators will find this guide a help if they decide to share the thoughts in *Women Serving God* with other people.

This study guide presents a positive case for the full participation of women in worshipping assemblies. It does not attempt to respond to objections or present alternative understandings. One may find responses and alternatives in *Women Serving God*.

In addition to *Women Serving God*, I would suggest these additional resources which I have found particularly helpful. Generally, these resources are generally consistent with the perspective offered in *Women Serving God*.

Bartlett, Andrew. *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts*. London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2019.

Guin, Jay. *Buried Talents: In Search for a New Consensus*. Jay Guin, 2007. Available at <https://oneinjesus.info/books-by-jay-guin/buried-talents/>.

McKnight, Scot. *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018.

Pierce, Ronald E., Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, editors. *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.

Westfall, Cynthia Long. *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016.

May God bless your efforts.

FOREWORD: MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

The teacher may want to make the Foreword in the book the first lesson, thus extending the whole lesson plan to nine lessons.

Seek to understand each position.

- What do they affirm? What does it prohibit?
- Who has held this position?
- What are the variations in the position?
- Why do they hold this position?
- What is important to this position?

Below are some questions for possible use among those who want to discuss these thoughts in their community using the above material.

1. How do you see these same three positions mirrored in various cultures throughout the world? For example, in some cultures, the first is still practiced in society as well as the church. How has this changed in US culture over the years?
2. Given these three positions, how has this changed in congregational cultures in the last few decades or years?
3. What do you regard as the key point—whether biblical text, cultural situation, or theological idea—in each of these positions?
4. In what ways are you able to appreciate each position? State how you may complement each position and value something in each?
5. If our first goal is mutual understanding (that is, we understand why each holds the position it does and we can appreciate the reasons why), how is that working for you?

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WEEK ONE

A Book A Nineteen Year Old Should Have Never Written

Texts: 2 Timothy 1:3-5; 3:10-17

Focus: To understand the rationale for the traditional position among churches of Christ that affirms male leadership in all worshipping assemblies.

Teaching Outline:

A. Timothy's Training in the Faith.

Paul reminded Timothy of how he was mentored and nurtured by his family, Scripture, and Paul. This prepared him to serve God in ministry to the church at Ephesus.

1. His mother and grandmother nurtured him in the Scriptures.
2. He knows the Scriptures are profitable for teaching in order to equip people.
3. Paul mentored Timothy and shaped his ministry and character.

B. John Mark's Early Story.

John Mark grew up in churches of Christ, loved the people with whom he worshipped and lived life, and defended the traditional role of women among churches of Christ.

1. John Mark never heard the voice of a woman in the assembly except for singing and baptismal confessions.
2. John Mark's first encounter with this question arose in the context of "chain prayers" during youth devotionals. May the girls also voice their prayers?
3. John Mark's interest in this topic grew through mock debates and discussions at Freed-Hardeman University.
4. During 1976-1977, John Mark and his friend wrote *Woman's Role in the Church*, which was published in 1978.

C. The Traditional Position Outlined.

Paul grounds male authority in God's act in creation. Therefore, male authority is a trans-cultural norm that applies to all contexts where men and women gather to worship and/or pray. This principle excludes women from all forms of authoritative leadership in the church, both public and private.

1. The male authority over women is grounded in God's act of creation. Therefore, it has trans-cultural authority.
2. 1 Timothy 2:8-15 is a timeless statement of the principle for discerning the appropriate role of women when men and women are gathered together to worship God.
3. 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, as applications of the principle of male authority, command the silence of women in the public assembly.
4. The principle is this: men possess a position of authority over women, and women must submit to this authority in order to please God.
5. This raises many questions related to application. Leaders must use the principle of male authority and leadership to resolve these questions.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your experience in churches of Christ in the past or present? How has this experience formed you in terms of expectations, assumptions, and emotional comfort or discomfort? When did this question first arise for you?
2. In your experience, where is the line that distinguishes between where women are encouraged to participate and where women are discouraged from participating in worshipping assemblies, small groups, and home devotionals?
3. Where is that line drawn in the traditional position as described in *Woman's Role in the Church*? What is the foundational principle? What is the rationale for that principle?

Resources:

Women Serving God, Part 1.

Sara G. Baron, *A Woman Called: Piercing Together the Ministry Puzzle* (Abilene: Leafwood Publishers, 2012), Part 1.

WEEK TWO

We Have Not Always Agreed.

Texts: 1 Corinthians 10:11-13

Focus: History provides a sense of self-understanding, awareness of changes and differences over time, and humbles us in our present task to understand the Scriptures.

Teaching Outline:

Introduction: 1 Corinthians 10:11-13

Paul used history to warn and teach the Corinthians. History serves us well when we listen humbly (knowing others have also studied the Bible), listen to understand (attempt to appreciate why they thought what they did), and learn from their mistakes (we all make mistakes). Whoever thinks they stand, must pay attention or else they may fall.

A. Reading C. R. Nichol's book, *God's Woman*.

Nichol does not represent a unique position in 1938, but it sounds strange to those who grew in churches of Christ in the mid to late 20th century. Women then had far greater freedom than we might imagine from our own experience.

1. C. R. Nichol believed women could lead in prayer, teach men in bible classes and other settings, and serve as deacons.
2. It was common in the early and mid 19th century for women to lead prayer, discuss the Scriptures in the assembly, and lead singing.

B. A Passionate Discussion from 1888 to 1938.

Nichol's book comes at the tail end of a long debate about the appropriate role of women in the public assembly. The debate was often intense, and it was incessant. It was, in some ways, a struggle for the soul of churches of Christ on this question.

1. The Southern Position (David Lipscomb, James A. Harding, and R. C. Bell): women may lead in private but in no public space (including in society as well as the church and home).
2. The Northern Position (Benjamin Franklin and Daniel Sommer): women may lead in song, prayer, reading Scripture, and exhortation in the public assembly.
3. Texas reflected a divided practice among churches of Christ (Nichol, Joe S. Warlick, William M. Wise, Foy E. Wallace, Jr.). Some were like the South, and some were more like the North.

4. The late 20th Century position among the vast majority of churches of Christ (the result of the 50 years of discussion from 1888-1938) was this: women may not lead in either a private or public setting where it involves some kind of positional authority over men in the home and church except in society (education, politics, and business).

C. Everyone is Culturally Situated.

Culture influences everyone. No one reads the Bible in a cultural vacuum. The Bible itself is culturally situated, and we are all culturally situated readers.

1. Cultural Dynamics in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.

- a. Conservatives: The True Woman Movement honored the domestic role of women in the home and opposed any social, public role for women.
- b. Progressives:
 - (1) The Temperance Movement: women led the fight for the prohibition of alcoholic beverages. Conservatives opposed public speeches by women.
 - (2) The Suffrage Movement: women sought the right to vote, which was given in 1920 by constitutional amendment. Conservatives opposed the amendment
 - (3) The New Woman Movement: women sought the opportunity to participate in politics, business, and social careers. Conservatives opposed such public activities on the part of women.
- c. Generally, the South was influenced by the True Woman Movement while the North was influenced by the New Woman Movement as well as

2. Cultural Dynamics in Scripture.

- a. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 itemizes several accessories which Paul regards as immodest: wearing gold and pearls, braiding hair, and expensive clothes.
- b. Reading the text as a blueprint for life without contextual interpretation or cultural discernment leaves the impression that such accessories are timelessly forbidden.

1 Timothy 2:9-10	1 Timothy 2:12
Paul prohibits wearing gold.	Paul prohibits women teaching.
Whatever Paul teaches is timeless.	Whatever Paul teaches is timeless
Therefore, wearing gold is forbidden.	Therefore, women are forbidden to teach.

- c. We recognize, however, the culturally situated nature of 1 Timothy 2:9-10. Consequently, we do not forbid wearing gold but seek to apply the principle which Paul is concerned. Is it possible that this is parallel with how we might read 1 Timothy 2:12 in contrast with how it is typically read?

Discussion Questions:

1. Given the historic practices of and discussion within churches of Christ, what is your take away about these different practices and understandings? What did you learn from hearing this history? What is the value of understanding this history?
2. Given the cultural movements present at the turn of the 20th century, how different is the cultural situation then and now? How might these movements negatively or positively shaped practices in the church?
3. Is it possible that the progressive movement in the early 20th century was a healthy correction to past practices? When is the church actually a “cultural” church (that is, a church shaped by culture)? Is it possible that culture might shape us in healthy ways and give us eyes to see what we did not see previously? Is it equally possible that culture might negatively impact present practices? Give some examples of each.
4. How does the attempt to understand 1 Timothy 2:9-10 illustrate hermeneutical problems as we seek to apply that text in our own cultural setting? What does this illustrate? Is the situation with 1 Timothy 2:11-12 similar to 1 Timothy 2:9-10?

Resources:

Women Serving God, Part 2.

Allen, C. Leonard. “Silena Moore Holman (1850-1915), Voice of the ‘New Woman’ among Churches of Christ.” *Discipliana* 56 (Spring 1996): 3-11.

Bailey, Fred A. “The Cult of True Womanhood and the Disciple Path to Female Preaching,” 485-517. In *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity, Volume Two*. Edited by Carroll D. Osburn. Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1995.

Grasham, Bill. “The Role of Women in the American Restoration Movement.” *Restoration Quarterly* 41 (1999): 211-39.

Hicks, John Mark. “Quiet Please: Churches of Christ in the Early Twentieth Century and the ‘Woman Question.’” *Discipliana* 68 (Fall 2009): 7-24. Available at <http://johnmarkhicks.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2013/04/privilege-or-silence1.doc>

Nichol, C. R. *God’s Woman*. Clifton, TX: Nichol Publishing Company, 1938. Also available as “God’s Woman” (1938). Stone-Campbell Books. 370. https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/crs_books/370

Pulley, Kathy J. “Gender Roles and Conservative Churches: 1870-1930,” 443-83. In *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity, Volume Two*. Edited by Carroll D. Osburn. Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1995.

Valentine, Bobby. "C. R. Nichol's God's Woman: Gospel Advocate Writer Says Women can Pray and Teach . . . in Church!" Available at <http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2016/04/12/c-r-nichols-gods-woman-gospel-advocate-writer-says-women-can-pray-and-teach-in-church/>

Valentine, Bobby. "Voices on Female Deacons in the Stone-Campbell Movement." Available at <http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2011/09/29/voices-on-female-deacons-in-the-stone-campbell-movement/>

Valentine, Bobby. "Where Are 'Apostate' Women Preachers Taking Us!?" Available at <http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2016/03/31/where-are-apostate-women-preachers-taking-us/>

WEEK THREE

Everyone Brings Their Gift to the Assembly

Texts: 1 Corinthians 14

Focus: Everyone is invited to bring their gift to the assembly and use it for the edification of the assembly except where their practice or speaking is disorderly and disruptive.

Teaching Outline:

Introduction: Context of 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Paul is answering questions he had received from the Corinthians about the function and use of their spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1). They were consumed with envy and jealousy without love for one another (e.g., 1 Corinthians 13). This resulted in disordered assemblies where people competed with their gifts which left the assembly unedified and chaotic (1 Corinthians 14:40).

A. The Plural Verbs and Nouns in 1 Corinthians Include Men and Women.

Throughout 1 Corinthians 14, Paul addresses men and women (plural nouns and verbs) and invites them to participate in the assembly in an edifying way. Most particularly, Paul invites “each one” (man and woman) to bring a gift before the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:26). “Brothers” (14:6, 20, 26, 39) is inclusive for men and women, which is how Paul uses it throughout the whole letter (1:10, 26; 2:3; 3:1; 4:6; 5:11; 6:5, 8; 7:24, 29; 10:1; 12:1; 15:1, 31, 58; 16:20).

14: 1 – *Pursue* love and *strive* for spiritual gifts, and especially that *you may prophesy*.

14:5 – Now I would like *all of you* to speak in tongues, but even more to *prophesy*.

14:6 – *Brothers*, if I come speaking to *you* . . .

14:12 – Since *you* are eager for spiritual gifts, *strive* to excel in them for building up the church.

14:20 – *Brothers*, *do not be* children in your thinking.

14:23 – If, therefore, the whole church comes together and *all speak* in tongues. . .

14:24 – But if *all prophesy*. . .

14:26 – What shall be done then, *my brothers*?

14:26 – When *you come together*, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.

14:31 – For *you can all prophesy* one by one, so that *all may learn* and *all be encouraged*.

14:39 – So, *my brothers*, *be eager* to prophesy, and *do not forbid* speaking in tongues.

B. The Disorder in the Assembly.

Though “each one” is invited to bring a gift before the assembly, Paul knows disruptions are present in the Corinthian assembly. He addresses each form of disorderliness in succession: tongue speakers, prophets, and wives. None are totally silenced but only silenced in connection with the disruption or disorder.

Persons	Occasion	Imperative	Adjustment
Tongue Speakers	No interpreter	Be silent (v. 28)	Only two or three
Prophets	Another receives a revelation	Be silent (v. 30)	Only two or three
Wives (of the Prophets?)	Disrespectful or Disorderly Speech	Be silent (v. 34)	ask at home

C. What Does it Mean to Say Women Should Not Speak?

What was disorderly about the women? It was not their speaking *per se* because “all” are invited to prophesy, “each one” brings a gift to the assembly, and everyone is encouraged to sing, but *a kind of speaking, a disorderly speaking*. The kind of speaking specifically identified by Paul was “asking.”

1. Paul directs wives to ask their husbands at home.
2. “Asking” tells us something about the nature of the speaking prohibited. How might “asking” be disorderly?
3. It appears that their “speaking” was an incessant (present infinitive verb) peppering of others with questions while they were speaking, perhaps their own husbands.
4. Some women (wives) were disrupting the assembly and creating chaos or disorder by interrupting the speech of others.
5. These women should submit themselves to the order of the assembly, just like the prophets also had to submit themselves it when another received a revelation. This preserved order in the assembly.
6. Moreover, we know this is not total silence for all women because we see women praying and prophesying in the assembly in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you heard 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 used in your experience? What did it silence, and in what contexts or to what sort of assembly did this silence apply?
2. How does reading the whole chapter—taking note of its plurals and instructions—help with reading 1 Corinthians 14:34-35? In your understanding, what kind of

context does this give to verses 34-35? How does it make a difference in reading those verses?

3. When one defines “speak” in verses 34-35, what key indicators are important to recognize? Does it mean all speech? If so, does it forbid singing as well as prophesying? Does it mean a particular kind of speech? How does one decide?

Resources:

Women Serving God, Part 3 (First Section).

Burke, Gary T. *God’s Woman Revisited: Women and the Church*. Eugene, OR: Luminare Press, 2019.

Hamilton, David Joel. “Should Women Keep Silent? Part One of 1 Corinthians 12:26-40.” *Priscilla Papers* 17 (Summer 2003). Available at <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/should-women-keep-silent>

Hommel, N. J. “Let Women Be Silent in the Church: A Message Concerning the Worship Service and the Decorum to be Observed by Women.” *Calvin Theological Journal* 4 (April 1969): 5-22.

Osburn, Carroll D., “The Interpretation of 1 Cor. 14:34-35,” 219-242. In *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity, Volume One*. Edited by Carroll D. Osburn. Joplin, MO: College Press, 1993.

Valentine, Bobby. “Importance of Context and Context, 1 Cor 14.” Available at <http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2019/04/11/importance-of-context-and-context-1-cor-14/>

WEEK FOUR

She Has Authority to Pray and Prophecy

Texts: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Focus: Women, covered in a culturally appropriate manner, audibly and visibly participated in the edification of the assembly through prayer and prophecy.

Teaching Outline:

Introduction: Two Questions Unexplored

We may leave two questions on the shelf at this point. (1) Whatever the covering is, whether hair or artificial (veil), it is immaterial to the question of how, where, and whether women audibly participated in the assembly. (2) Whatever the meaning of “head” in 1 Corinthians 11, women still participated audibly in the assembly. Whatever “head” means, it does not prohibit their participation in the assembly. Women may pray and prophesy while, at the same time, honoring their head. In other words, for women to pray and prophesy in the assembly is not a violation of male headship (however that is understood).

A. What is praying and prophesying?

1. Both men and women are praying and prophesying. Whatever that means for men, it means the same for women.
2. Praying and prophesying was part of the assembly in 1 Corinthians 14. Whatever it was in 1 Corinthians 14, it was the same in 1 Corinthians 11.

1 Cor 11	Prayer in 1 Cor 14	Prophecy in 1 Cor 14
Any man who prays or prophecies . . . (11:4).	Interpreted tongue speaking edifies the assembly (14:5).	Those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation (14:3).
Any woman who prays or prophecies . . . (11:5).	If I pray in a tongue . . . (14:14).	Those who prophesy build up the assembly (14:4).
Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled? (11:13).	I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also (14:15).	All prophesy one by one so that all may learn and be encouraged (14:31).

3. Prayer and prophesy edified the assembly. The assembly listened, learned, and glorified God as a result. Edification comes through

“revelation, or knowledge or prophecy or teaching” (14:6). Interpreted tongue speaking and prophecy are for the edification of the assembly (14:12).

B. Where are they praying and prophesying?

1. It is a public setting in which men and women are gathered together; otherwise, there would be no need for the women to be covered.
2. It is a setting where those gathered are edified by the praying and prophesying. This assumes a setting where others are listening in order to be edified like in 1 Corinthians 14.
3. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul refers to “traditions” he gave to the Corinthians. Some of them they maintained (11:2). Some of them they did not (11:17). Both traditions are associated with the gathering of men and women to worship God, whether through prayer and prophecy or the Lord’s supper (11:23-26).
4. Finally, the traditions happen in the “assembly” (church). What 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 describes are the custom of the assemblies (churches) of God (11:16), and the Lord’s supper happens in an assembly (church) of God (11:22).
5. Paul is describing what happens in the Corinthian assembly gathered to glorify God where men and women pray and prophesy and the assembly gathers around the table of the Lord. In our contemporary setting, this would mean women audibly and visibly prayed and prophesied on what to us is typically a Sunday morning.

C. Who gives women the authority to pray and prophesy?

1. Some suggest that men give women permission to pray and prophesy because men are the “head” of the women. Others suggest that the woman’s covering is tantamount to male authority, and when she wears the covering, women are authorized to pray and prophesy.
2. However, 1 Corinthians 11:10 says something different. “A woman ought to have authority over her own head because of the angels” (NIV, 2011).
3. This is the only use of “authority” in 1 Corinthians 11-14. The only other time Paul uses “authority” in 1 Corinthians about men and women refers to the *mutual authority* husbands and wives have over each other’s bodies (1 Corinthians 7:4).
3. While some translations have “a symbol (or sign) of authority on her head” (NRSV), the Greek verb is active: to have authority or to have the right. The four other uses of “to have authority” (*exō + exousia*) in 1 Corinthians are these:
 - a. “Do we not have the right to our food and drink” (1 Corinthians 9:4).
 - b. “Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife” (1 Corinthians 9:4).
 - c. “Is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living” (1 Corinthians 9:5).
 - d. “having his own desire under control” (1 Corinthians 7:37).

4. The covering, important for cultural propriety for the sake of modesty (not as a symbol of male authority!), gives a gifted women authority to pray and prophesy. The only time the term “authority” is used in 1 Corinthians 11 describes the authority a woman actually has rather than something she is given by the man.
5. When appropriately expressing a modesty that belongs to godliness, women may pray and prophesy in the assembly because they have the right or authority to do so. God gives them the authority to pray or prophesy; men do not give them that authority.

D. Headship and Balance (1 Corinthians 11:11-12).

1. The woman is sourced from the man and for the man in order to complete the fullness of humanity so that humanity might pursue its vocation (Genesis 1:28).
2. At the same time, the man is sourced from the woman as men now come into the world through women.
3. Paul is concerned that some might take the meaning of “headship” in a negative direction and, therefore, reminds the Corinthians that “headship” is balanced with interdependency.
4. “Nevertheless,” Paul wrote, neither man nor woman are independent of the other. “In the Lord,” men and women live in mutual dependence because both come from God, who is the source of all.

Discussion Questions:

1. While the meaning of “head” is widely discussed and the source of much disagreement, what do you think of the claim that women may pray and prophesy even as they honor their head so that headship (whater that means) does not exclude leadership?
2. What is the nature of “praying and prophesying” in 1 Corinthians 11 and how does it relate to 1 Corinthians 14?
3. What characteristics do you see in 1 Corinthians 11 that help us identify the nature of the assembly Paul describes? Do 11:2-16 and 11:17-34 describe the same assembly?
4. From where does a women get her authority to pray and prophesy in the assembly?

Resources:

Women Serving God, Part 3 (Second Section).

Bartlett, Andrew. *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts*. London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2019.

Cervin, Richard S. "On the Significance of *Kephalē* ("Head"): A Study of the Abuse of One Greek Word!" *Priscilla Papers* 30 (Spring 2016). Available at <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/significance-kephal%C4%93-%E2%80%9Chead%E2%80%9D>

Gorman, Heather. "What Has Aeneas to Do with Paul? Gender, Head Coverings, and Ancient Appeals to Origin Stories." *Priscilla Papers* 30 (Summer 2016). Available at <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/what-has-aeneas-do-paul-gender-head-coverings-and-ancient-appeals>

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Liefeld, Walter, "Women, Submission and Ministry in 1 Corinthians," 134-153. In *Women, Authority & the Bible*. Edited by Alvera Mickelsen. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986.

Osburn, Carroll D., "1 Cor. 11:2-16—Public or Private?," 307-17. In *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity, Volume Two*. Edited by Carroll D. Osburn. Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995.

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Valentine, Bobby. "'Nevertheless:' Paul and Women in the Assembly, 1 Cor 11.4-5." Available at <http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2018/06/23/nevertheless-paul-and-women-in-the-assembly-1-cor-11-4-5/>

Westfall, Cynthia Long. *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

WEEK FIVE

The Pouring Out of the Spirit and New Creation

Texts: Numbers 11:24-25; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:16-21; Galatians 3:23-4:7; 6:14-16.

Focus: When God poured out the Spirit on the disciples at Pentecost, God poured the reality of the new creation into the lives of the people of God and empowered them to participate in the mission of God.

Teaching Outline:

A. Pentecost.

1. Given the resurrection and enthronement of Jesus the Messiah, the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost planted the seeds for transforming the present evil age into a new age and gifted renewed Israel with the power of the Spirit for that transformation.
2. What Moses prayed for in Numbers 11 and what Joel prophesied in Joel 2 was realized on the day of Pentecost when God poured out the Spirit on all Israel.

Numbers 11:24-25	Joel 2:28-29
Seventy	All
Prophesy	Prophesy
Men	Men and Women
Old (Elders)	Old and Young
Free (Recently Liberated)	Free and Slave

3. Pentecost was the moment when God renewed the promise to Abraham, filled Israel with the Spirit of God, and began the extension of that promise to the whole world (Acts 2:33, 39).

B. Pentecost and New Creation

1. When God poured out the Spirit through Jesus the Messiah, its promise applied to Gentiles as well as Jews. It applied to all ethnicities. It abolished any stratification between Jew and Gentile in the church. Yet, racism, as it has from the beginning, still plagues the church.
2. When God poured out the Spirit through Jesus the Messiah, its promise applied to slaves as well as free people. It planted the seed for the abolition of slavery, and it abolished any stratification between the enslaved and free within the church. Yet, it took the church 1800+ years to realize God intended to free all slaves.

- When God poured out the Spirit through Jesus the Messiah, its promise applied to women as well as men. It planted the seed for the abolition of male oppression and domination. It abolished any stratification between male and female within the church. Yet, women only received the right to vote one hundred years ago, and women are still limited by the church in the exercise of their gifts.

Joel 2:28-29	Galatians 3:26-28
All Flesh	Jew/Greek
Sons/Daughters	Male/Female
Free/Slave	Free/Slave

- Just as Gentiles and slaves were gifted by God with visions, dreams, and prophesying, so also God gifted women as well. Just as stratification was abolished for Gentiles and slaves within the community of faith, so it was abolished for women as well. No longer are free Jewish males gifted for ministry and leadership, so are enslaved Gentile women.

C. New Creation.

- The topic of Galatians 3-4 is inheritance. God promised Abraham an inheritance, which included the gift of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:14). Because we belong to Christ, who is the seed of Abraham, God sends the Spirit into our hearts, by whom we cry, "Abba" (Galatians 4:6).
- Everyone in Christ inherits the promise, including both male and female. The inheritance, however, is not simply about salvation or entrance into the body of Christ. It is also about giftedness for participation in the mission of God.
- There is no distinction between slave and free, or Jew and Gentile, or male and female in terms of their experience of the Spirit. All are gifted with the Spirit. This implies they are also gifted by the Spirit. God gives the Spirit for the sake of ministry, leadership, and mission.
- This is new creation (Galatians 6:14-16). It is the renewal of the original vision of creation where both male and female are invited to participate in the mission of God as equal partners (Genesis 1:26-28). Paul draws the language of "male or female" from Genesis 1:27.
- The presence of the Spirit is the presence of new creation, and new creation means the renewal of God's original intent of equality without stratification. There are no more slaves. There are no more ethnic allocations of tasks. There is no difference in gifts based on gender.

Discussion Questions:

- Reflect on the significance of Pentecost. Why is this such a momentous event and turning point in the history of God's redemptive work in the world?

2. How does Pentecost connect with the reality of the new creation in the church? How is new creation expressed in this moment? In what way are we new creatures and a new community in Christ?
3. What is the significance of “inheritance?” How does this have a larger meaning than simply membership in the body of Christ or our shared entrance into the body of Christ through baptism?
4. Is the presence of the Holy Spirit simply about communion with God and each other? How does the presence of the Spirit enable our participation in the mission of God? What does that look like in a new creation community of believers?

Resources:

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WEEK SIX

Women in the Hebrew Bible

Texts: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25; 3:16; Exodus 15:20-21; Judges 4:4-10; Micah 6:1-8; 2 Chronicles 34:22-28; Esther 9:29-32.

Focus: Created as full partners with a shared mission, women also exercised authority in the religious and political life of Israel as leaders among God's people.

Teaching Outline:

A. Creation and Fall

1. Genesis 1:26-28. Men and women share the same identity (image of God) and are commissioned with the same vocation (fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over it). Men and women share dominion over the earth as they participate in the mission of God together.
2. Genesis 2:18-25. The mission of God is not a solitary task but a shared one, whether in marriage or in community. Man recognizes the newly created woman as a partner (*'ezer*) who will share the missional task. They share the same flesh and bones, and they become "one flesh." The woman is the culmination and completion of creation. There is no explicit statement about male authority or preeminence in Genesis 1 or 2.
3. Genesis 3:16. Due to the introduction of moral chaos, the woman will turn to the man (her desire will be for him) in order to bear children but it will be toilsome for her and he will "rule" over her. We see the evidence of this corruption of the sexual relationship in male objectifications, pornography, rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. It is the corruption of sexuality, which is necessary for the childbearing mentioned in Genesis 3:16. However, Song of Songs 7:10 uses the same term ("desire") where the man will desire the woman. In the Song of Songs, the woman takes the lead in the sexual relationship. The Song of Songs is a reversal of Genesis 3:16b.

B. Women in Israel.

If God empowered and authorized women to speak and act with authority in Israel and God does not violate God's own standards grounded in creation, the example of these women cannot be dismissed as something irrelevant or simply belonging to the "Old Testament." God does not authorize, sanction, and empower what God forbids by virtue of creation. God does not act contrary to God's own creative intent.

1. Miriam (Exodus 15:20-21; Micah 6:4). God sent three prophets to lead Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness: Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. On the banks of the sea, Miriam led the whole congregation of Israel in worship.

2. Deborah (Judges 4:4-10). God raised up Deborah as both a prophet and judge who exercised both religious and political authority in Israel. Samuel was the only other named judge who was also a prophet.
3. Huldah (2 Chronicles 34:22-28). The prophet Huldah delivered the word of the Lord to both the religious (High Priest) and political (King Josiah) authorities in Israel. She also identified what was Scripture and what was not.
4. Esther (Esther 9:29-32). Esther wrote the regulations for the Feast of Purim. The “command of Esther” fixed the religious practices for the feast. She exercised both religious and political authority among the Jews in exile.
5. Summary from *Women Serving God*, Part 5, end of section two.
 - Women are *never silenced* in the assemblies of Israel.
 - Miriam, a female prophet, *led Israel in worship*.
 - Deborah *exercised authority* over men in Israel as judge and prophet.
 - Huldah *exercised prophetic authority* over the king and high priest of Judah.
 - Women *preached* the gospel.
 - Women served on Israel’s *praise team*.
 - Women served as *wise sages* in the villages of Israel.
 - Wisdom, personified as a woman, heralds her message and *teaches men*.
 - Esther *exercised both political and religious authority* over Israel.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which point about Genesis 1-3 is most helpful or problematic? Why do some read male authority into Genesis 2 when equality and shared dominion is taught in Genesis 1? What changed from Genesis 2 to Genesis 3 in terms of male/female relationships?
2. Which Hebrew woman do you find most interesting? Why? What value do these examples have for our present understanding of the function and ministries of women in the assembly?
3. Is silence in the assembly something that only belongs in church gatherings? Israel’s women were not silent; they were singers, prophets, and exercised authority over Israel as leaders. What is the difference between Israel and the church in terms of the giftedness and leadership of women?

Resources:

Women Serving God, Part 5 (Sections 1 & 2)

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WEEK SEVEN

Gifted Women in Kingdom Ministry

Texts: Luke 1:52-54; Luke 2:26-38; 8:1-3; 10:38-42; 22:24-30; 24:1-12; Romans 12:3-8; 16:1-16.

Focus: Women were gifted to participate in the mission of God and served alongside of men as partners (co-workers) in the mission of the kingdom of God.

Teaching Outline:

A. Jesus.

God comes as a Galilean, male descendent of Abraham, Judah, and David. This does not mean Jesus only represents men. Rather, he represents all human beings since God is conforming everyone to the image of Christ. God's incarnation as a Galilean Jewish male does not limit leadership in the kingdom of God to Galilean Jewish males.

1. Mary reverses Eve. Whatever problems are laid at Eve's feet are reversed in Mary. Moreover, Mary is entrusted with the raising of God's child. Her song announced his ministry (Luke 1:52-54).
2. Some women travelled with Jesus, provided the resources the disciples needed, and served their needs (Luke 8:1-3). They were also disciples of Jesus.
3. Jesus promotes servant leadership. The table of the Lord is the place where servants are served by Jesus. They also serve each other. There is a different kind of leadership style in the kingdom of God than is found among the nations. The table embodies this shift in style as all are welcomed to serve at the table.
4. Women are the last at the cross, the first at the empty tomb, and the first to announce the gospel.
5. Why are there only male apostles? What is the significance of this? Does it limit leadership in the kingdom of God to twelve, to only Jews, to only men, and to only Galileans? It is symbolic of the continuity between Israel and the ministry of Jesus who renews Israel. Twelve symbolizes continuity. At the same time, twelve free Jewish men does not exclude slaves, Gentiles, or women from leadership functions in the kingdom of God.

B. Paul.

1. God has given the church gifts for the sake of ministry, mutual service ("one another" relationships), and edification. These gifts are the work of the Spirit who dwells in every member of the body of Christ, both male and female.
 - a. Paul names some specific gifts in Romans 12:6-8.

We have gifts (*charismata*) that differ according to the grace given to us:

- Prophecy, in proportion to faith
- Ministry (*diakonian*), in ministering (*diakonian*)
- Teacher (*didaskōn*), in teaching (*didaskalia*)
- Exhorter (*parakalō*), in exhortation (*paraklēsei*)
- Giver, in generosity
- Leader (*proistamenos*), in diligence
- Compassionate, in cheerfulness

b. In Scripture, women exercised these gifts.

- Women prophesied (Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5).
- Women ministered (Romans 16:1-2; Luke 8:1-3).
- Women taught (Acts 18:24).
- Women exhorted through prophecy (1 Corinthians 11:5; 14:3).
- Women were generous (Acts 9:36).
- Women were leaders (Romans 16:1-2).
- Women showed others mercy (Acts 9:36).

c. Gifts are exercised in the context of mutuality. There is no indication that the exercise of these gifts is conditioned or limited by gender.

- Romans 12:5 we are members *one of another*
- Romans 12:10 love *one another*
- Romans 12:10 outdo *one another* in showing honor
- Romans 12:16 live in harmony with *one another*
- Romans 13:8 love *one another*
- Romans 14:13 let us no longer pass judgment on *one another*
- Romans 14:19 pursue what makes for peace and *mutual* upbuilding
- Romans 15:5 live in harmony with *one another*
- Romans 15:7 welcome *one another*
- Romans 15:14 instruct *one another*
- Romans 16:16 greet *one another* with a holy kiss

d. Leadership gifts are not intended to place people in positions of authority over another but are means by which one serves the other through mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21).

2. The Women in Romans 16:1-16.

a. There are six women who are engaged in six different functions. This is a snapshot of one city with at least three house churches. The below chart comes from Christopher Roy Hutson.

Individuals in Rome (Romans 16:1-16)

Description	Men	Women
1. Deacon		Phoebe (16:1)
2. Patron		Phoebe (16:1)
3. Coworker	Aquila (16:3) Urbanus (16:9)	Prisca (16:3)
4. Host of a house church	Aquila (16:5) Aristobulus (16:10)? Narcissus (16:11)?	Prisca (16:5)
5. Laborer		Maria (16:6) Tryphaena (16:12) Tryphosa (16:12) Persis (16:12)
6. Apostle	Andronicus (16:7)	Junia (16:7)
7. Sister		Phoebe (16:2)
8. Kinsman/-woman	Andronicus (16:7) Herodion (16:11)	Junia (16:7)
9. Fellow-prisoner	Andronicus (16:7)	Junia (16:7)
10. Beloved	Epainetus (16:5) Ampliatius (16:8) Stachys (16:9)	Persis (16:12)
11. Approved	Apelles (16:10)	
12. Elect	Rufus(16:13)	
13. Members of a house-church (no descriptor)	Asyncritus (16:14) Phlegon (16:14) Hermes (16:14) Patrobas (16:14) Hermas (16:14)	Rufus' mother (16:13)
14. Members of another house-church (no descriptor)	Philologus (16:15) Nerea (16:15) Olympas (16:15)	Julia (16:15) Nerea's sister (16:15)

- b. Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2): a *diakonos* (deacon/servant) of the church at Cenchræa who was a patron (*prostatis*) of Paul's ministry.
- c. Priscilla (Romans 16:3-4): hosted a church and taught Apollos along with her husband (Acts 18:26). She was one of Paul's co-workers or co-laborers. This language is most often used to describe those with whom Paul shared leadership in ministry (e.g., Timothy, Epaphras, Apollos, and Epaphroditus among others).
- d. Junia (Romans 16:7): she was a well-known apostle, along with her husband, whose years in the faith predate Paul. Her apostleship probably means something like a missionary or one sent by churches as a representative.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is most striking about the ministry of Jesus and women? What does his relationship with women teach us about ministry?
2. What difference does it make when Paul describes a man as a “deacon,” “co-worker,” or “fellow-laborer” in reference to men? What does it mean when he so characterizes a woman? Why do we make a distinction or not make one? What principle is at play? Where do we find this principle?
3. Why do some “one another” statements include women (“sing to one another”) while others exclude women (“instruct one another”)? What is the meaning of these “one another” statements in the context of male/female relationships in the church? Are there any general restrictions embedded in them?

Resources:

Women Serving God, Part 5 (Sections 3 & 4).

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WEEK EIGHT

“I Do Not Permit . . .”

Texts: 1 Timothy 2:8-15

Focus: Rather than laying down a timeless principle that excludes women from leadership, Paul excludes a particular group of deceived women from leadership because they were spreading myths and false teaching among the Ephesian house churches.

Teaching Outline:

Week one outlined the conventional and received understanding of 1 Timothy 2:8-15. This lesson offers a different but credible way of reading that text. Is it possible that the received understanding treated the text more as a blueprint rule rather than as part of the letter? Consequently, it lifted the text out of its context in order to support traditional practices much like some traditions treat 1 Timothy 2:9-10. Open to the possibility that we have previously misread this text, how might we read it more appropriately in its context?

A. What is the Purpose of the Letter?

1. 1 Timothy 1:3-4, 18 in conjunction with 1 Timothy 6:2b-4a, 12 identify the major purpose of the letter which was to combat false teaching.
2. The whole section (2:1-15) guides Timothy's opposition to false teaching.

Fight the good fight, Timothy (1:18-20).

Therefore, I urge prayer (2:1-7).

Therefore, I want men . . . likewise women to . . . (2:8-15).

3. Whatever Paul means by his instructions in 2:8-15, they are part of his response to the presence of false teaching in the Ephesian house churches.

B. Who are These Women?

1. Some, but not all, women were flaunting their accessories in the assembly and/or in their lifestyle. This may have been part of a “New Woman” movement in Rome that promoted wealth and seduction or perhaps it was the style of the Artemis Temple cult. The love of material possessions (1 Timothy 6:5, 17) and sexual immorality (1 Timothy 1:10) were also part of the ungodliness in the community. Both are reflected in the accessories Paul names in 1 Timothy 2:9-10.
2. These women were involved in the promotion of false teaching, myths, and other practices inconsistent with the gospel, the mystery of godliness (1 Timothy 2:4-6; 3:16; 4:6). They were to promote godliness (1 Timothy 2:10; 5:3), but the

false teachers promoted values that were opposed to godliness (1 Timothy 1:3, 6:3, 5, 6, 11).

3. The young widows and the women of 2:9-10 have much in common. They share the same agenda, which is linked to the false teachers in the Ephesian community.

Women and False Teaching in 1 Timothy	Women in 1 Timothy 2:9-15
Widows devote themselves to prayer (5:5)	Women are to pray (2:1, 9-10)
Widows encouraged to <i>godliness</i> (5:3)	Women encouraged to <i>godliness</i> (2:10)
Some women <i>learned</i> to be idle (5:13)	Women should <i>learn</i> (2:11)
Some <i>professed</i> false knowledge (6:20-21)	Women should <i>profess</i> godliness (2:10)
Wealth and love of money (6:9-10)	Wearing wealthy accessories (2:9)
Widows are meddling busybodies (5:13)	Women to learn in quietness (2:11)
Some widows pursue sensual desires (5:6, 11)	Wearing seductive clothing (2:9)
Idle, not devoted to <i>good works</i> (5:9, 13)	Devoted to <i>good works</i> (2:10)
Saying what they should not say (5:13)	Not permitted to teach (2:12)
Some have turned to follow Satan (5:15)	Eve was deceived by the serpent (2:14)

C. What is Prohibited?

1. Paul addresses the women of 2:9-10. These women are not permitted to teach and should learn the gospel anew, which is the mystery of godliness (1 Timothy 2:4-6; 3:15-16).
2. Women are encouraged to learn in a quiet, submissive way. This is no different from what is expected of men. People should learn and receive the teaching so they can pass it on to others (2 Timothy 2:2—“faithful people,” not males). These women need to relearn the gospel and submit to its values; they need to learn again the meaning of “godliness.”
3. Teaching is prohibited. Some widows were “saying what they should not” (1 Timothy 5:13) as they went from house church to house church. They were seeking to persuade men, perhaps seduce them or allure them into their practice of the magical arts. This is the meaning of the term “busybody” in 1 Timothy 5:13, which only occurs elsewhere use to describe the practice of magic and sorcery (Acts 19:19).
4. *Authent*, often translated “exercise authority” or in the KJV “usurp authority,” is a negative term. Paul had another word for the positive meaning of authority (*exousia*). This is the only time *authent* is used in the New Testament, but it occurs in Jewish literature for violent and abuse practices associated with paganism (3 Maccabees 2:29; Wisdom of Solomon 12:6). It refers to an aggressive, bossy, and potentially abusive practices and is associated with pagan contexts. Positive or neutral uses of this term do not appear before or at the time of Paul’s use.
5. Essentially, Paul wants to stop the women of 2:9-10 from spreading the agenda of the false teachers that was disrupting the Ephesian house churches.

D. Why is it Prohibited?

1. Rather than rooting a principle in the chronology of creation, Paul retells the story of creation, fall, and redemption in a compressed fashion in order to make a particular point.

	Trans-Cultural Principle	The Story Narrated
Text (2:13)	Adam was first formed.	Adam was first formed.
Narrative Ground	Invests Adam with the rights of the primogeniture (firstborn) between the sexes.	Appeals to the narrative where Adam, first created, was first instructed but listened to his deceived wife.
Principle	“First” entails the principle of male authority over women.	Eve functions as a typology for deceived women in order to warn the Ephesian church.
Application	Women should not teach men or have authority over men.	Women must first learn and then teach; until then, they should remain quiet.

2. The narrated story is a more credible reading of the text. Deception is the problem in Ephesus (the word is repeated twice in 2:14). Paul uses Eve as a type for deceived people in 2 Corinthians 11:3.
3. The fuller story is apparent when we splice together what is *explicit* in the Genesis narrative with what is *explicit* in 1 Timothy 2:13-15.

- Creation** 1. *Adam was first formed (1 Timothy 2:13).*
 (The man was formed from the ground, Genesis 2:7.)
 (The woman was formed from the man, Genesis 2:21-22.)
- Fall** 2. *Adam was not deceived (1 Timothy 2:14).*
 (He knew the command of God, Genesis 2:15-17.)
 (But he listened to Eve, Genesis 3:17.)
3. *Eve was deceived (1 Timothy 2:14).*
 (The serpent tricked her, Genesis 3:13.)
4. *Eve became a transgressor (1 Timothy 2:14).*
 (She ate the fruit, Genesis 3:6.)
- Redemption** 5. *She will be saved through the childbearing (1 Timothy 2:15).*
 (God promised a seed to crush the serpent, Genesis 3:15.)
6. *If they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty (2:15).*

4. Eve represents the women in the Ephesian house churches who had been deceived by false teachers. She illustrates the dangers of deceived women teaching and persuading or overpowering (*authent*) others. The same danger is

true for men as well, but the *specific situation* in Ephesus involved deceived women.

E. What about Childbearing?

1. Some women in Ephesus were promoting immodesty when they should have been prompting godliness. Paul says “they” (those women) will be saved through faith, love, and holiness when they pursue life with modesty (1 Timothy 2:15).
2. “She will be saved” in 1 Timothy 2:15 refers back to the woman in 1 Timothy 2:14. “She” is Eve.
3. Eve will be saved through “*the* childbearing.” This is probably a reference to the birth of Christ through whom salvation comes (1 Timothy 2:4-6). This is the story of redemption. Though Eve was a transgressor, she will be saved by Christ, and so will the women of 2:9-10 if “they” continue in faith with modesty.

Summary: Some women promoted ungodliness through their clothing and accessories, which served the agenda of the false teachers. They also went from house to house spreading myths and practicing their magical arts, which reflected pagan or cultic values. These women had been deceived by false teachers just as Eve had been deceived. Consequently, Paul does not, at this time, permit them to continue their teaching and overbearing persuasion within the context of the house churches. Since they are deceived, they must learn, and because they are deceived, they will find salvation the way Eve did, that is, through Christ and by continuing in faith, love, and holiness with all modesty.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who are the women in 2:9-10, what are they doing, and how do they share the same agenda as some of the younger widows in 5:11-16 (also 2 Timothy 3:6 with 2:16-18)?
2. If we understand *autent* in a negative sense, how does this shape the interpretation of 2:11-12? What are women doing among the Ephesians house churches?
3. How does the story of Adam and Eve parallel the situation in Ephesus? What is the role of deception? Why is deception so prominent in the retelling of the narrative of Genesis 2-3?
4. How does the story of salvation in 2:15 fit into the agenda of Paul’s instructions in 2:11-12?

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