

# X Marks The Spot

<sup>3</sup>*Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*  
(Jude 1:3. ESV)

<sup>17</sup>*I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.* (Romans 16:17. ESV)

<sup>1</sup>*But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.* (Titus 2:1. ESV)

## **Equal But Different**

**March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

**Genesis 1:26-27**

**Genesis 2:18-25**

**Galatians 3:27-28**

**1 Timothy 2:8-15**

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## **Introduction:**

Good morning! We are at week 10 of an 11 week series called “X-Marks The Spot” in which we are exploring some of the real and seeming tensions we discovered in our Walk Through The Bible journey in 2012. The tension we are dealing with this morning is probably not the most complicated in terms of exegesis but it might be the most unpopular and it is certainly the most frequently denied in our day and age. I want to talk to you about maleness and femaleness and how the Bible says we are equal but different – not as a result of the fall but as a result of God’s creative intent. Turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 1:26-27.

## **Equal**

Genesis 1:26-27 says this:

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27. ESV)

Let's talk briefly about what it means that God created humanity in his image and after his likeness. We have to remember that this was in the first instance something God told Moses to say to a group of recently liberated Hebrew slaves somewhere in the desert of Mount Sinai about 3500 years ago. Think about that for just a second. To a Hebrew slave this would have suggested a few very important things. The first of those things we pull out from the actual words that are used. The Hebrew word for image is *tseh'lem* and means both resemblance and representative. The Hebrew word for likeness is *dem-ooth'* and means shape, likeness, manner, or similitude. So when the Hebrews heard this it meant that in some way they were like God and they represented God over Creation. These Hebrews lived in a world that had kings in it and in that time and in that culture the ruling kings were described as the image and likeness of the national god. So, in Egypt, for example, the Pharaoh was referred to as "the image and likeness of god". The name Tutankhamen, King Tut, as we call him, actually means "the living image of the god Amun". Let that settle on you. Moses has just told a bunch of Hebrew slaves that in reality, they are kings and queens. Every son of God is a king. Every daughter of God is a Queen. He or she is the image and likeness of Yahweh, the only Living God. That is pretty exciting information if you are a Hebrew slave hiding in the desert of Sinai. Men and women are exalted creatures. They are ruling creatures. They are like God in some ways and they represent God as lords over creation.

That begs the question: "In what way do men and women resemble God?" Taking the whole of Scripture into consideration I would suggest that it means that something of God's character and holiness has been pressed upon the human soul. God is truth and there is a yearning in the human soul for truth. God is love and there is a yearning in the human soul for love. The conscience of mankind, tarnished as it is, gives testimony to this fact. I think we can also say that it means that in some way the appearance of men and women gives testimony to the inner nature and character of God. Here is where we begin to deal specifically with the issue of gender. It is very significant that the text says that God made humanity male and female; humanity in it's design is a unity and a diversity; just as is God. God is three distinct persons and yet one God. Unity and diversity; as with God so with humanity in his image.

The emphasis in Genesis 1 is clearly on equality of value and equality of nature. The man and the woman are exalted in value and dignity because they are together the image bearers of Almighty God.

Flip forward now to Galatians 3:27-28. What was lost and obscured in rebellion and curse is found again in the salvation that is through Christ.

<sup>27</sup>For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:27-28. ESV)

The Apostle Paul is saying that to be saved in Christ is to now play the role of Christ – it is to manifest and represent Christ in all our behaviours through the power of the Spirit of Christ operating within us and when that is happening all traditional barriers to fellowship are broken down. There can be no division now between rich and poor, Jew and Greek and men and women. In Christ, filled with Christ, manifesting Christ, the curse of perpetual conflict is overcome and we are restored to peace. That sounds a lot like what was said of the man and the woman way back in Genesis chapter 2:

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup>And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:24-25. ESV)

Unity, belonging and peace. This was ours in creation, it was lost in rebellion, but it is restored to us in Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God. This is where a Christian conversation about gender should begin, but if we would speak the whole counsel of God then it is not where it should end. Open your Bibles again to the Book of Genesis, this time to chapter 2:18-25.

## Different

This is an extended telling of the creation of humanity.

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” <sup>19</sup>So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup>Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.”

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup>And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:18-25. ESV)

In this story the emphasis is clearly now on differentiation. The rib is taken out of the man to make something “other” that is equal in value but in a complementary way. It is sometimes said that God did not fashion Eve out of Adam’s toe lest he grind her into the earth, nor out of his head lest he be ruled by her. He made her out of his rib that she might walk with him and be his companion.

The critical issue for us to take from this text is first and foremost, that differentiation between the sexes was God’s idea. God wanted humanity to be male and female. Differentiation is not the result of the fall. It precedes the fall. It is the essential design of God. Secondly we need to notice that God made the man first. Adam is the first man, he is the federal head of the race of mankind and he is given certain responsibilities associated with that role. This is very important to notice. You cannot make sense out of 1 Timothy 2 unless you understand this. You can’t make sense out of Romans 5 and the relationship between Adam and Jesus if you don’t understand this. Here in Genesis 2 the commands of God were delivered to Adam way back in 2:16 – when Eve did not yet exist.

<sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,<sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17. ESV)

Adam, created first, is given the stewardship of God’s Word. He is responsible for knowing it, teaching it and enforcing it as the rule of creation.

We also need to notice that after the awareness of this responsibility is settled upon Adam, God introduces the issue of partnership and help. Adam is made to feel his aloneness and he is made aware that aloneness is not good – aloneness is not God’s design. He is shown all manner of things that he is not to “mate” or join with. This parade of unfit mates would have made Adam very aware that God’s general pattern is for creatures to pair by gender and he must have been wondering why he of all God’s creatures was to be alone. God often creates the awareness of a need before he meets that need.

Well God causes a sleep to fall upon Adam and he takes a rib and fashions the woman. In our mind's eye we can imagine God telling Eve to stand off to the side while he awakens Adam. God tells Adam that he has one more creature for him to inspect and name and that he is to wait here while God brings this wonderful creature to him. And then God appears with Eve on his arm and the first words of man in the Bible erupt as a love poem:

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.” (Genesis 2:23. ESV)

This is the first marriage in the Bible and it is between one man and one woman and it is officiated over by the God of the Universe. That truth lies behind much of what the New Testament authors teach about human sexuality.

Before we leave this text we have to tie up a few things. First of all we probably have to say a few words about the English phrase “a helper fit for him”. Much of the distaste that modern readers have for this story is rooted in those words. The Hebrew word in the text is *‘ezer* and it is not pejorative. God is called our *‘ezer* so it does not imply lower status. The word simply means “a helper that corresponds to Adam’s deficiency”. God is our helper and his holiness corresponds perfectly to our deficiency and yet to call God our helper in this way is not to say that we are superior to God. Likewise, to call Eve Adam’s appropriate helper is not to make any statement about Eve’s lesser value or status. It is simply to say, this is the partner Adam needs to fulfil his God given mandate. My wife and I have a saying: “It takes two people to live one good life.” That has been our experience and that is indeed the theology of the Bible.

The emphasis in Genesis 1 is on the equality and exalted dignity of the man and the woman. The emphasis in Genesis 2 is on the differentness and correspondence of the man and the woman while at the same time, continuing to stress their essential equality. Equal but different. Within that “equal but different” framework we have encountered role differentiation – Adam was given the responsibility to steward God’s Word over all creation. We have met the issue of headship. Adam was created first. He is the federal head and even as he rejoices over his partner he continues to exercise headship. He names her. Naming was an act of headship and authority. Adam recognized his essential unity with Eve in calling her woman. Wo-man. Other and equal

and yet headship remains part of Adam's calling. Eve was given the responsibility of helping Adam fulfil his calling. Equal value with different assignments. All done in the likeness and image of God. We recall that the three members of the Trinity are equal in value and yet they assume different roles. The Holy Spirit does not die on the cross for our sins, but he is not thereby less exalted or less valuable within the Godhead. The Holy Spirit we are told sustained Christ on the cross and his ministry is to exalt Christ – to lift him up and yet he is not thereby diminished in value or worth. Within the Trinity we see equality of value, the assignment of roles and the delight in other exaltation. What we see in the essential creation design of humanity is very much in that image and likeness.

Open your Bibles now to 1 Timothy 2:8-15. Let's look at how the New Testament deals with the issue of differentiation with respect to responsibility and role. I want to provide just a bit of background to this text. The Apostle Paul had spent some 3 years in Ephesus and had built up a hub church that spread the Gospel into many of the surrounding towns in Asia Minor. Timothy was the young man that Paul had left in charge of the hub church and Paul writes to Timothy this letter largely in response to the infiltration of some false teachers and some false practices. Unfortunately, Paul does not specify what these false teachers were teaching – he assumes that Timothy knows the details and so the letter is solution heavy and doesn't re-hash the problems. That is wildly significant. Many liberal protestant teachers attempt to avoid the implications of this text by constructing a very elaborate account of what the problems were – they provide fascinating narratives of reformed temple prostitutes and proto-gnostic theology and all sorts of wonderful things – and then they say that since those problems don't trouble us today, this passage is entirely irrelevant. But hold on just a second. First of all, that is all guesswork. As we shall soon see, there is no information about any of that in this text. Second of all, even if that could be proven, does that mean that once we understand the immediate context for a teaching, unless that exact context exists today the teaching has no enduring authority? That would effectively gut a huge percentage of Bible teaching. It is the general pattern of the Bible to embed a universal principle inside a specific cultural application. Let me show you a quick example. The Old Testament says:

<sup>4c</sup>You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain. (Deuteronomy 25:4. ESV)

What we have there is a universal principle embedded inside an agricultural application. The principle is fairly obvious: whatsoever you labour at you should derive income from. It is a principle of fairness and motivation. Even cows will work a little harder if they get to share in the product. Now you might say, “well I don’t live in an agricultural society and I don’t own any cows so this verse is irrelevant to me.” Wrong. The Apostle Paul shows us the right use of it in 1 Corinthians 9 to argue that Gospel ministers have the right to derive their income from Gospel labours:

<sup>9</sup>For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? <sup>10</sup>Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. <sup>11</sup>If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? (1 Corinthians 9:9-11. ESV)

Paul extracts the universal principle from the agricultural application and freshly applies it to a problem in his day. The point is, you cannot simply say: “Aha! There was an immediate cultural context to this teaching and that cultural context has passed ERGO this teaching is irrelevant.” You must extract the principle and freshly apply it in appropriate ways in every culture and every age. Again I share that simply to inoculate you against the slight of hand that so many liberals attempt with this passage. There were unique cultural problems in Ephesus but we don’t know what they were and even if we did, that does not nullify the principles contained within this teaching. Let’s read the text:

<sup>8</sup>I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; <sup>9</sup>likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, <sup>10</sup>but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. <sup>11</sup>Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. <sup>12</sup>I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup>For Adam was formed first, then Eve; <sup>14</sup>and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. <sup>15</sup>Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (ESV)

Obviously there is a lot that we could say about this passage but we will restrict ourselves because of time to a discussion of what the Apostle Paul teaches with respect to gender and headship and ministry. Let’s deal first with what he teaches and then look at why he teaches it or upon what basis he grounds these views.

### **What Paul Teaches With Respect To Gender, Headship And Ministry:**

The first thing we see Paul stressing in verses 8-9 is the need for women to dress with modesty particularly when participating in public worship. The text assumes that women will pray in public and it stresses that when they do they should do so while modestly attired. Men should do so without wrangling and women should do so without exhibitionism.

He goes on to say that women should learn. Now before we get to the potentially offensive stuff, we should linger a bit over that often overlooked fact. Paul says that women should learn in the church. That is actually a little bit revolutionary. Do you know that there is not a single verse in the Koran directed at women? Not one. The Bible speaks to women, has women prophets, has women evangelists, has books named after women; Ruth and Esther; and here Paul says that women should learn in the church. Judaism didn't stress that, the Greek philosophers did not have women students but Jesus had women disciples and the church continues the tradition. Don't be so eager for the controversial that you skip over the revolutionary.

He goes onto to say however, that they should learn in quietness or silence. The Greek word there is *hey-soo-khee-ah* (ἡσυχία) and has the sense of stillness and quiet. It is not an outright prohibition against speaking, as is clear from the fact that the passage implies that women are praying in the service. In 1 Corinthians 11:5 Paul explicitly permits women to prophesy in worship services, so what does Paul mean when he says that women should learn in stillness or quiet? Well he goes on in the next verse to tell us:

<sup>12</sup>I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. (1 Timothy 2:12. ESV)

Same Greek word for quiet there. Clearly by learning in stillness or quiet Paul means that she is not to TEACH in the public worship services, neither is she to exercise authority in the worship service. The word used for "to teach" is *did-as-ko* which is a very general word, it is not as specific as *kay-roos-so* "to preach or to proclaim" or *you-ang-ghel-id-zo*, "to announce or Gospel"; it is broad and likely includes both of those more specific terms within it. As to what it means for a woman to exercise authority in the public worship, in the light of 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 it seems to mean that she is not to exercise public discernment over the teaching as indeed the elders are called to do. She is not to be the doctrinal arbiter in the church neither is she to be the doctrinal deliverer in the church. The word that Paul uses in verse 11 which is



translated “in all submission” is *hoop-ot-ag-ay* (u0potaġh/) means “to be subordinate”. Thus we might summarize the Apostle’s teaching here as being that women may pray, prophesy and learn in the public worship services, assuming modest dress, but she is not to teach or to usurp the authority of the ruling elders over the doctrine and preaching of the church. She is to rest in “subjection” to their assigned headship. That seems to be the gist of what Paul is saying here; let’s look now at why Paul would say that here.

### **Where Paul Grounds This Teaching**

Now I want to confess that this issue has played a huge role in my own journey with these texts. When I was in seminary I was very open minded – so open minded in fact that I think my brain fell out. I remember dealing with texts like these in my New Testament classes in first year and having the courage to ask my professor, “Why then does our denomination have women preachers?” His answer was that if I were to study the cultural context for this teaching I would understand that this teaching of Paul was highly localized. The women at Ephesus were former prostitutes, they were uneducated, they were strange women and their active participation in the worship services was a scandal. It is scandal that Paul is opposing here, not women preachers per se; if scandal is the main principle then the proper application is that in today’s culture to avoid scandal we MUST have women preachers because our culture finds their absence offensive and distracting. He then went on to tell me that there were clues hidden in the original Greek that I would spot when I was more proficient in the language that would help make this clear to me. I took that entirely on faith. That was my position for the first 5 years of my ministry. I had that written into my will. When my wife and I had our first child, a daughter, we were told to make a will and in that will I stipulated that if we were to die I wanted my daughter raised in a church that would encourage her to pursue whatever gifts she felt she had, including a preaching gift. I stipulated that my daughter was to be raised in an egalitarian church. Then a funny thing happened. I learned to speak Greek. I read these documents in the original language and I couldn’t find these hidden clues. Then another funny thing happened. I noticed Paul’s argument. I noticed what he grounded this teaching in and I noticed what he was absolutely silent on. Look carefully at verses 13-14:

<sup>13</sup>For Adam was formed first, then Eve; <sup>14</sup>and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. (1 Timothy 2:13-14. ESV)

He doesn't make a cultural argument. He makes a creation argument. He argues his point out of Genesis 1-3. Paul doesn't say a word about culture. He doesn't tell me whether these women were prostitutes or not. He doesn't tell me whether they were educated or not. He doesn't tell me whether it would have mattered to him if they were former prostitutes and uneducated. He does not root his argument in ANY CULTURAL ISSUES WHATSOEVER. He grounds his teaching in universal design. He tells me about Adam's federal headship. He says that it was when the man ceded the stewardship of the word to his wife that we got into trouble in the first place and he says that in the renewed and restored house of God men under the Gospel will not be permitted to do that again. They will take up the word and study it and they will teach it and weigh it and steward it as they were told to from the first.

### **Summary And Conclusion:**

It seems then that the consistent teaching of the Bible, Old Testament, and New, is that men and women are equal in value and dignity and yet different in role and responsibility. These differences are going to show up in the way we dress, the way we worship and the way we parent. Men are going to be men in the Christian home and in the church. They need to steward the word of God and to teach it and enforce it. Women are going to need to help because we cannot do it without you. Women need to help without usurping. They need to submit to the man's stewardship and ministry of the word and they need to trust that all of this is ultimately for their good and for God's glory.

That's what the Bible seems to be saying, but that is a message our culture doesn't want to hear and so many are confused as to what we should do. Some churches have capitulated to culture entirely and they argue that gender is irrelevant, gender is chosen, gender is a matter only of sexual preference and external plumbing and should not be discussed as relevant in the church. Others have simply gone quiet. They don't deny that the teaching is in the Bible but neither do they want to make it an issue or a barrier to people coming to know Christ as Saviour. What should we do? Is this a Gospel issue? Is this a necessary tension or can we let it go?

Let me end by making an appeal for this tension as indeed a Gospel issue. I believe it is a Gospel issue because the Gospel begins with the Sovereignty of God over all his creation. The Gospel

begins with a God who is large and in charge. Sin – all sin – is when we stop believing that God’s Word is good and that God himself can be trusted. And what is conversion, what is repentance, what is faith except a return to the place where we bow before the Goodness of our Creator and we declare: “You are God and I am not. Your words are right and lead to life”. Or as Isaiah 66:2 says:

But this is the one to whom I will look,  
to the humble and contrite in spirit,  
who trembles at my word. (Isaiah 66:2. NRSV)

This is a Gospel issue. More so today than at any time previous in human history. God made us male and female. God made us a unity with inner diversity. God made us in his image and according to his likeness and the Bible says and all very good. This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.