

1 Timothy 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

Analysis

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. Paul continues instructions regarding women in church worship, addressing learning and teaching roles. "Let the woman learn" (gynē en hēsychia manthanetō, γυνὴ ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μανθανέτω) is actually progressive—in contrast to some Jewish and pagan contexts where women were denied education, Paul affirms women should learn Christian truth. The verb is imperative: women must learn, not remain ignorant.

However, this learning should be "in silence" (en hēsychia, ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ), better translated "quietness" or "peaceful receptivity." The same Greek word appears in verse 2 describing peaceful living. This doesn't mandate absolute silence but indicates receptive, non-disruptive learning rather than contentious disputing. The phrase "with all subjection" (en pasē hypotagē, ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ) indicates humble submission to the teaching authority of qualified church leaders.

This instruction reflects the created order Paul will explain in verses 13-14, not merely cultural accommodation. While women participated in early church life (prophesying, serving as deacons, hosting churches), certain authoritative teaching and governing roles were reserved for qualified men. This complementarian understanding maintains equal value and dignity while recognizing distinct roles in church leadership.

Historical Context

The instruction for women to learn was revolutionary in many ancient contexts. Jewish women typically weren't taught Scripture formally; Rabbinic tradition included statements like Rabbi Eliezer's: "Better to burn the Torah than teach it to women." Greco-Roman education generally excluded women from formal philosophical and rhetorical training. Paul's insistence that women learn Christian truth elevated their status and acknowledged their spiritual capacity.

However, the Ephesian church apparently faced problems with women teaching authoritatively in ways that violated proper order. The false teachers may have particularly influenced women (2 Timothy 3:6-7), who then spread error. Some may have claimed newfound freedom in Christ justified rejecting all gender distinctions. Paul's instruction reaffirms that equality in Christ (Galatians 3:28) doesn't eliminate functional differences in church leadership roles.

The emphasis on submission reflects broader New Testament teaching on authority structures in church and home. Just as all believers submit to church leadership (Hebrews 13:17), children to parents (Ephesians 6:1), and wives to husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24), women in corporate worship submit to the teaching authority of qualified elders. This structured order reflects God's design, not cultural patriarchy.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does your church ensure women receive thorough biblical education while maintaining complementarian convictions?
2. In what ways do you demonstrate humble receptivity to biblical teaching rather than consumer-like evaluation?

3. How can churches apply biblical gender role distinctions without diminishing women's value or limiting their extensive ministry opportunities?

Interlinear Text

γυνὴ	ἐν	ἡσυχίᾳ	μανθανέτω	ἐν	πάσῃ	ὑποταγῇ·
the woman	in	silence	Let	in	all	subjection
G1135	G1722	G2271	G3129	G1722	G3956	G5292

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 11:3 (Parallel theme): But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Colossians 3:18 (Parallel theme): Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Genesis 3:16 (Parallel theme): Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

1 Peter 3:1 (Parallel theme): Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

Titus 2:5 (Parallel theme): To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Esther 1:20 (Parallel theme): And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.