

WOMEN'S STUDIES AND "STANDARD SITUATION"

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One point in 1 Timothy 2 has to do with husband-wife vs. man-woman as Paul's intended reference. Connecting the statements of 1 Timothy with (a) a husband-wife contrast rather than (b) a man-woman contrast represents a crucial variable between instruction on marriage roles vs. gender roles. A third approach to the text has something of the same effect but seems to be more straightforward and therefore less cumbersome: (c) Paul is addressing "standard situation," that is, married with children.

Advantages of that tack on women's studies include the following: (1) it fits into a general manner of dealing with issues in the New Testament, not only on women's issues but on other subjects and not only in Paul but elsewhere. For example, New Testament writers speak of baptism in terms of standard situations. We are not told what to do with "hard cases" like a leper who decides to become a Christian (cp. someone in our own day who wants to accept Christ in an ICU or a north Alaskan Eskimo who wants to be baptized in December). Closer to our study area is Paul's will that younger widows remarry. Likewise in 1 Timothy 2:15 the apostle speaks of a woman as bearing/rearing children without verbalizing an aside that exempts barren women. In 1 Corinthians 14:34, where he addresses women asking questions in the gathered assembly (ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*), he phrases his directive in terms of women who have husbands, whereas a significant minority would not be married. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul discusses veil-wearing as per standard situation: the man being the head of the woman (11:3), woman created for the man (11:9), the man and the woman are not without each other in the Lord (*i.e.*, are not to operate individually, 11:12), the references to the creation account, and so on. The creation account itself envisions standard situation. It serves as the historical and doctrinal foundation for all other biblical statements about men-women relationships in the Bible.

A second advantage of standard situation is that (2) it does not depend so heavily on vocabulary arguments and close grammatical distinctions that are often too difficult to establish and may only correlate with conclusions that are possible but not necessary or obviously preferable. Among other things, we need not assume the task of showing when ἀνὴρ (*anēr*) and γυνή (*gunē*) mean "man and woman" rather than "husband and wife." Instead, we appeal to more basic contextual factors that vocabulary decisions end up being based on anyway. In 1 Timothy 2, for example, Paul envisions a married situation since he speaks of women raising children (2:15). Even his references to Adam and Eve (2:13-14) are clearly husband-wife references because Adam and Eve were spouses. It becomes then a further question decided by considerations whether and how the comments in Genesis 1-3, 1 Timothy 2, or 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 apply to male-female circumstances aside from marriage. In other words, again, Genesis 1-3 is itself a description of standard situation.

Agreeing that when Paul addresses standard situation in 1 Timothy 2 and elsewhere, does not remove the texts from questions about gender roles. We are faced with why he addresses the standard situation as he does. Speaking of circumstances aside from marriage, we could assume that God had natural reasons for ordering husband-wife relationships as he did, reasons we have elsewhere called "relative gifting," which are by degree true of men and women statistically speaking, regardless of marital status. So even though Paul is speaking in 1 Timothy of a husband-wife circumstance (standard situation), we do not automatically take his comments

purely as culturally conditioned (culture) practices relative to marriage only or sheer will-of-God mandates (authority) only for the sake of good order. Those comments may be rooted in created nature, which God bestowed in conformity to the nature of the larger circumstance he was bringing into being—marriage and society. They would be true of men in contrast to women regardless of marital status or cultural circumstance. This point can then be related to wisdom vs. law as the sense in which Paul means what he indicates in these verses to Timothy as well as in his other texts about related issues.

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