

# 3: men, women & freedom

Each generation has to contend with gender roles in church and society.  
This study asks us to consider Paul's teaching for our time and context.

**open it** Think back to previous generations. **How distinctive have the gender roles been in those times?** What things were not permitted for men or women to do in society and church because of their gender?  
**How is it now? Has it changed? If so, how?**

It is no coincidence that the one passage in the Bible prohibiting women teaching Scripture appears in the one set of letters where we explicitly know that false teachers were targeting and working through women.

**read it** **Read** - carefully read 1 Timothy 2.1-15  
**React** - how does this reading make you **feel**? Why might that be?  
**Respond** - what do you **think** about what you have read?  
Which bits make sense / raise questions for you?

Talk about the questions that came to your mind when you read the scripture.

**Give time for everyone to talk and listen carefully to others' thoughts and ideas.**

When engaging with scripture there are various responses we can make:

- we can **IGNORE** it, can you think of any verses which we do not follow?
- we consider the **CONTEXT** - can you think of verses where the context impacts our understanding of scripture?
- we follow it **LITERALLY** - can you think of verses that we follow literally and completely?

**What are the tools, processes and questions we employ to make our decision about how to interpret scripture?**

**live it**

- **Consider the box** - which response is the author making - IGNORE, CONTEXT or LITERAL? Do you agree with him?
- in order to understand Paul's view on women, we would need to look at more verses than these. What do Romans 16.1, 16.7 and Acts 18.26 add to the conversation?

**apply it**

- You may feel as though we have, as a church, moved on from these issues. Would those in your group agree?
- Are there any other demographics, races, types of people who we would struggle to engage in the life of the church or whose voice may be silenced?

**pray it**

**God, who is love, teach us to love each other as you love us—from the very heart of who we are, embracing friend, embracing neighbour, embracing stranger.**

**Generous, self-giving, surmounting all barriers – real and perceived.**

**Move us to love as you love. Amen**

*Paul's letters to Timothy in Ephesus provide a glimpse of the situation: false teachers were misleading the women (see 2 Tim. 3:6, 7). These women were probably (and especially) some widows who owned houses the false teachers could use for their meetings. Women were the most susceptible to false teaching only because they had been granted the least education. This behaviour was bound to bring reproach on the church from a hostile society that was already convinced Christians subverted the traditional roles of women and slaves. So Paul provided a short-range solution: "Do not teach" (under the present circumstances); and a long-range solution: "Let them learn" (1 Tim. 2:11). **Craig S Keener***