

## “Men, Women & The Church”

### I Timothy

Downtown and Lexington

May 10th, 2020

#### HAPPY MOTHER’S DAY

Good morning family, and Happy Mother’s Day to all of the mothers viewing this! We love you and appreciate you, and we want to affirm the incredible need we have for you and everything you do as a mother. You often don’t get enough thanks, and I wanted to express that we are grateful for you.

Also, I want to say that we know that for some, Mother’s Day is one of the most difficult days of the year because often times Mother’s can’t be with their children and children oftentimes can’t be with their moms, and I know that is made even more difficult by all of the social distancing. If you’re hurting this mother’s day, I want you to know that I have prayed for you that God would bring you great peace and comfort in this time.

#### INTRO

Yall know something that I love to do? I love winning an argument. You say something, and then someone disagrees and tells you you’re wrong, and then you come back and show them that you were right all along. There’s almost this rush that you can feel when that happens. You feel elevated and superior in that moment. It’s like you’re saying: “look at me, I’m smart”.

Winning the argument and putting ourselves over someone else in our mind or in their mind, makes us feel good... And if we “lose” the argument, we feel low; we feel down.

Or maybe it’s not arguing with someone. We also love to compare ourselves to others in our minds and think about ways that we are better than them, especially if there’s an area where we know they’re better than us. **We consistently compare ourselves to others in terms of intelligence, looks, morality, etc and try to outdo and one-up each other** because putting ourselves above someone else, **even if only in our minds or in their minds**, can legitimately feel very gratifying and be kinda addictive. But unfortunately, it can be very problematic as well.

Paul addresses this here in **1 Timothy 2:8-10**

For context, in 1st Timothy, Paul is giving instruction and encouragement on how to be the church, the household and family of God. In this passage he’s going to address men and women, about their tendency to work so hard to try to outdo one another when they get together..

#### **I Timothy 2:8**

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

As we've said already in this series, there were these worthless discussions and teachings that were very harmful and destructive to the church at Ephesus where Timothy is currently serving as a pastor. And now we have this indication from Paul that there is angry quarreling going on between the men in the church.

Some translations translate that word for “quarreling” as “dissension”. Which is **an argument or disagreement that leads to discord**. The men here are argumentative.

They're the type:

- That like to argue to show everyone how right they are.
- To maybe start an argument about sports just to have a little debate and then get angry when someone strongly disagrees.
- To argue angrily online with someone about what's going on in the world, especially politics.
- To use the sermon discussion time in a LifeGroup to talk/argue about everything they don't like about the sermon instead of talking about how the truths in the sermon can be applied to their lives/hearts...
- They're the type to care more about being right than making things right
- ... win the argument even if it means losing closeness the relationship
  - **Because they're trying to feel superior and earn an elevated status in their network of friends by being right**
- They're the argumentative type.

And they're getting into these angry quarrels, likely in their everyday lives and during times of fellowship and worship.

And we see in the second part of verse 8, Paul tells them what they should do instead of being involved in this quarreling. He states that he desires for them to *pray, lifting holy hands*.

### **RAISING OUR HANDS DIRECTS OUR HEARTS/MINDS TO GOD**

**Posture** - He's calling them to pray with a specific **posture**. Remembering that they are the holy, set apart people of God.

Lifting your hands in prayer puts us in a posture where we're acknowledging that God is higher and greater and holier than we are. **Instead of trying to earn an elevated status**, it acknowledges how glorious and good God is and seeks to elevate Him in our minds. Lifting up our hands in corporate worship is a physical action that reminds us of what we're doing when we pray. We're approaching someone that is set apart. Someone majestic and pure and righteous. Someone who reigns as king over all of creation.

Raising our hands to God reminds us and reminds everyone else in the room who this whole gathering is all about, and what we are all about as a people/family. It helps the individual who's raising their hands to direct their attention towards God, and it helps those that see others in the room with their hands raised

be reminded of what this gathering is all about. It's about us humbly engaging with One that is higher than us. Which is how we should be in times of corporate worship, and, even more important than just once a week, its how we should be in everyday life.

In the Psalms, there are several examples of God's people singing about lifting their hands to God. *One such example is Psalm 143:6:*

**Psalm 143:6**

I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.

Lifting our hands can be an expression of desire for the Lord that honors and glorifies Him, and demonstrates that He is the only One who can actually satisfy the deepest longings of our souls.

### **ANGRY QUARRELS POINT ATTENTION TO OURSELVES**

Angry quarrels do the exact opposite. They had people speaking confidently about things when they had no clue what they were talking about. They were going back and forth, quarreling to seem like they were in the right... like they knew more than the other person.

Who does that put the attention on? Them! That type of arguing is generally an attempt to elevate one's self over someone else. They were a people brought together **to enjoy worshipping God with their lives**, and when they would come together, maybe for corporate worship or fellowship, **they were instead, worshipping themselves**. There was a lot of worship going on, but they weren't worshipping the one that is worthy of worship!

Instead of reminding themselves and everyone that what they truly need is for Christ to be made much of, they were engaging in quarreling were acting as if it was all about them!

Instead of showing off to everyone:

- "Hey, Christ alone can satisfy our thirstings...
- Seek Him! Know Him! Worship Him! Love Him!
- Meditate on Him! Follow Him! Satisfy your heart in Him!"...

... instead of doing that, they were more focused on promoting self. They wanted to be made much of.

Paul's encouragement is letting them know, "Hey, you have this twisted. You're putting your energy/focus/drive into the self-promoting act of angry quarrels about stuff that isn't important. Focus your energy on making this thing all about Him!" Family, that's who we are! We are a family who has found Christ to be so glorious that we focus our lives on knowing Christ and making Him known to others!

Because their focus isn't on Christ, they are actually hindering the church more than helping the church.

Brothers, I gotta ask you, when you're together with other believers, whether that's in a corporate worship setting or even just hanging out, or catching up on a Zoom call, how intentional are you about pointing our attention to Jesus?

Do you care more about winning debates and disagreements which makes you look good, than you care about directing others to Christ in a way that shows off how awesome He is.

When you've participated in corporate worship in the past, how much have you considered what you might be able to do in that time to actively, intentionally point your mind and heart and the minds and hearts of others to Christ as you worship?

How much more would it help lead our FoC in worship if the next time we were able to get together to worship, every male in the room that's a follower of Jesus lifted their hands in the air, stretched out our hands to God as a sign to ourselves and to everyone else that God is what we need to satisfy our thirstings!

That would be powerful!! Just by showing with your body who this whole thing is about... I'm telling you it would make a powerful proclamation of the goodness of our God!

In your LGs, men, how focused are you on making sure the focus of the meeting is to point us to Christ as we catch up on life, review the mission, study God's Word and discuss the sermon, and engage our hearts. I believe God would use it in powerful ways if all of the men in our LGs took ownership over our LGs focus on God and worked hard to make sure the LG Meetings didn't get derailed by talk of sports or what we did that week.

Men, I believe God would greatly use that to grow our church family! Let's unite to promote Him and His glory and His fame, because that what the church needs!

Keeping the focus on Christ, is so important that *after addressing the men, Paul goes on and addresses the women as well in verse 9.*

### **I Timothy 2:9**

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,

Notice that Paul begins that verse with the word "*likewise*". He's showing us that he has a similar desire for the women.

As can be the case today, at that time in Ephesus, it was common for women to dress in specific ways to draw attention to themselves. Paul is saying, don't use your external appearance in that way. **Women at that time** would use the braiding of hair and jewelry and expensive/costly attire as a means of showing off, and likely trying to put themselves above others. Those who had wealth could dress in expensive or fancy ways to gain attention.

Many in the church have used this verse to talk about the need for women to make sure they aren't dressing in a sexualized way... and that definitely fits with what Paul is saying, but that's not a thorough view of what Paul is saying here.

Let's unpack what "with modesty and self-control" means:

- **Modesty** - To do something with modesty is to do it in a way that is proper, suitable, to not be overly proud or confident. To not be vain or boastful.
- **Modesty with self-control** - among other things, means to keep oneself from following the urges/desires to use external appearance to try to elevate one's self to achieve a certain status

Seeking to gain attention by being sexually attractive is something that a woman can do to draw attention to herself, and that's inappropriate for a follower of Jesus...

But from what I hear, oftentimes the goal of women dressing in ways that are fancy or attention-drawing is to compete with other women as much as to gain the attraction of men.

So here's what can end up happening. Men and women alike deal with insecurity, not being 100% secure in who we are as image-bearers of God. This insecurity often leads to compare ourselves with others so we can feel a bit better about ourselves, and then this **comparison often leads to competition**.

There's a quote by Anna Wintour, editor of *Vogue Magazine*: "If you can't be better than your competition... just dress better."

And when this competition between women seeps into the church, it shifts a body of believers adopted into the family of God that seek to worship Him, more and more into becoming a group of people that are worshipping the creation over the creator. **It takes us from being a Jesus-Centered Family on Mission with Him and for Him, and makes us a self-centered family on a mission to elevate ourselves.**

The women in Ephesus:

- were seeking their own glory instead of the glory of God.
- Seeking to lift up themselves instead of lifting up Christ.
- Wanted their names to be made much of instead of the name of Christ being made much of.

Today, women who aren't practicing modesty with self-control as we see in verse 9:

- Might spend a lot of time and energy trying to create and come up with the perfect picture to post and share with friends so they can get a lot of likes... hopefully more than others that they know...
- Might feel a little bit sour towards another woman in their LG that she compares herself to.
- Have lingering tension with their biological sister that potentially has been going on since childhood
- Might be comparing themselves to other specific women in their minds when they're choosing what they're going to wear
- Might find themselves analyzing and criticizing other women behind their backs as a way to make themselves feel superior

It makes sense that Paul said, “likewise” before he addresses **the women because the women in Ephesus were doing the same thing that the men were doing**. They were competing with each other and causing division.

**The men were:**

Competing and seeking to draw attention to themselves through angry arguments

**Trying to earn an elevated status** by winning arguments

**The women were:**

Competing and seeking to draw attention to themselves more subtly by through external appearance

**Trying to earn an elevated status** through external appearance to draw attention to themselves

**Both were fighting to keep people’s attention and admiration on them instead of God!**

So sisters I have to ask you, are there times when believers are coming together, in a LifeGroup meeting, or a worship Gathering, or just a time of fellowship, and your main thought is how you or others feel about the way you look?

Do you often use external appearance to try to draw attention to yourself?

Are you seeking to outdo or outdress or look better or more attractive than others within the church?

Or maybe even if it doesn’t affect the way you dress, do your mind and heart often get distracted by comparing how you look to the way that other women look in times when you’re with other believers?

Does your insecurity cause you to often measure yourself against the other women in your LG?

The church is a group of people that are all about being united together for worship. These men and women were 100% seeking to promote worship. The problem is, they were promoting the worship of vastly inferior false gods. Paul has already gotten on the teachers that were teaching false doctrine about God with their words. Now he’s showing that they were also teaching false doctrine with their actions.

Their competition that they were so invested in, proclaimed that God wasn’t worthy of all glory. It proclaimed that mere humans were worth more attention than Him. So, they were actually **in competition with both God and with each other!**

To be in **competition with God** for His glory is the exact opposite of what our lives are to be about as Christians.

To be in **competition with believers** is also completely **futile** because it’s just like running on a **treadmill**. You’re **working really hard, but you’re really not getting anywhere**.

When we do this, we are ultimately trying to earn some elevated status. We are **striving** and working to be looked up to, admired, respected, and highly esteemed. The problem is, you can never rest when this is what you're fighting for.

If you're arguing/debating to try to get someone to think you're intelligent or that you know a lot about God, there's always gonna be another debate that you have to win.

If you're using external appearance to try to be esteemed more highly, there will always be someone else that comes in that you'll have to compete with.

Or if you always want to be the funniest, most helpful, best leader, most respected, or the one that's in the best shape, you'll always just exhaust yourself for your own vanity and you'll turn brothers and sisters that you should love into enemies that you have to step on to try to earn the status you're after.

Sure you can gain someone's respect or get people to look up to you or admire you at some point, but then you just have to keep laboring for it and working to earn it over and over again.

*And the thing that makes this the most foolish is that as a Christian, you have already been freely given the highest status that anyone can ever have!*

If you are a follower of Jesus, you are (a):

- Child of the most High God. You are His son. You are His daughter. You are in close relationship with the most famous, most glorious, most beautiful, most powerful, most majestic One. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. He is the King of Kings. He is high and exalted, and you get the privilege of walking in close relationship and fellowship with Him as we are a part of His royal family.
- And one day, when He returns, and judges the world and fully establishes and consummates His Kingdom, you will be shown to be one of His chosen people. You will stand with Him and He will stand with you!

Paul talks about Christ somehow sharing His status with us because we are IN HIM in Ephesians 2:4-6.

#### **Ephesians 2:4-5**

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses,

That was our status: spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins. But Paul continues...

#### **Ephesians 2:5-6**

Made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

And now, just like God raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand when He ascended, somehow, He likewise raises us up and God sees us as resurrected with Christ and also ascended and seated with Christ!

Family, we waste our time working and striving and competing with God and competing with each other **to earn an elevated status**, when **we've already been freely given the greatest status that can be achieved by a man or a woman because we are in Christ!**

Let us realize and rest in the fact that our King who died, was raised, and ascended into heaven until He returns for us has already elevated our status, eternally... Let us not work and strive to elevate ourselves or try to earn a greater status. Instead, let's seek to direct our hearts and eyes - and the hearts and eyes of everyone else to the one who is infinitely glorious and truly worthy and deserving to be lifted up.