



Can a woman teach with godly authority?

YES, but not with ungodly authority! God wants humble, godly teachers of truth to flourish. But in the pagan city of Ephesus, false teachers abounded in the church. Paul instructed Timothy to stop them. In 1 Timothy, Paul repeatedly mentioned the false teachers of myths and genealogies and used neuter pronouns to describe them - *certain people, these, some, they*. These neuter pronouns show that false teachers were both male and female. (See 1:3-7, 4:7, 5:15, 6:3, 6:9, 6:17-18, 6:20). Paul wanted all false teaching to cease immediately! Specifically, in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, Paul focused on a specific style of authority/false teaching:

“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.”

A quiet, learning, and teachable woman

Two points we must acknowledge before we jump into the unique word used for *authority* in this passage:

1. Note initially, Paul shifted from plural “women” (2:9) to singular “woman” (2:11-15a) before shifting back to plural “women” (2:15b). This chiasm of plural/single/plural highlights a key point. If Paul intended to convey a universal prohibition, why not keep “women” plural throughout the passage? This is a clue that Paul does NOT intend to silence the teaching/authority of all women for all time, but a certain type of false teacher in Ephesus.
2. Paul’s imperative is to *instruct* “a woman.” He commands that this particular woman “learn” in the position of a teachable student. Paul advocated for the rehabilitation of any false teacher, not the silencing of all women.

Authenteo... one-time only

Paul used this abnormal word for authority ONLY ONCE in all of his writings. Since Paul and other writers used *exousia* (authority) 105 times in the New Testament, something unique must exist about this situation. This special word, found twice in Apocryphal references, was actually linked to “murderous” child sacrifice (See the Wisdom of Solomon 12:6), or to calling oneself “the origin” (See 3 Maccabees 2:28-29). The main point is, *authenteo* was not a common, normal word for authority. (See One-Pager, *Are women more easily deceived than men?*) Some believe women of Artemis could call down curses on men - perhaps this woman sought to follow their example?

Good or bad *authenteo*?

So, what type of authority was Paul disallowing? We have two options. Either: 1. Paul was stopping normal, good authority exercised by godly women, or 2. Paul was prohibiting a type of usurping, self-focused, murderous authority of women over men. The choice should be clear. Paul did not permit self-promoting, arrogant teachers of falsehoods.

Paul used authenteo to highlight the false teaching of Ephesus, and show that no one should “lord over” another person.

Conclusion

All false teachers should be quiet, stop teaching lies, and learn correct information. Paul did not allow false teachers to usurp authority and dominate believers, and neither should the Church today. Godly teachers, male or female, should step up in humility.

Key Term

ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΟ

authenteo = “authority” (Good or Bad?)

4 Crucial Questions

1. What does this teach us about **GOD**?
2. What does this teach us about **PEOPLE**?
3. What command should I **OBEY**?
4. With whom can I **SHARE** this?