



Continuing our series on learning some techniques for sharpening our sword of the Spirit and defending our faith, in this study we'll be learning more and hopefully see some things in a different way.



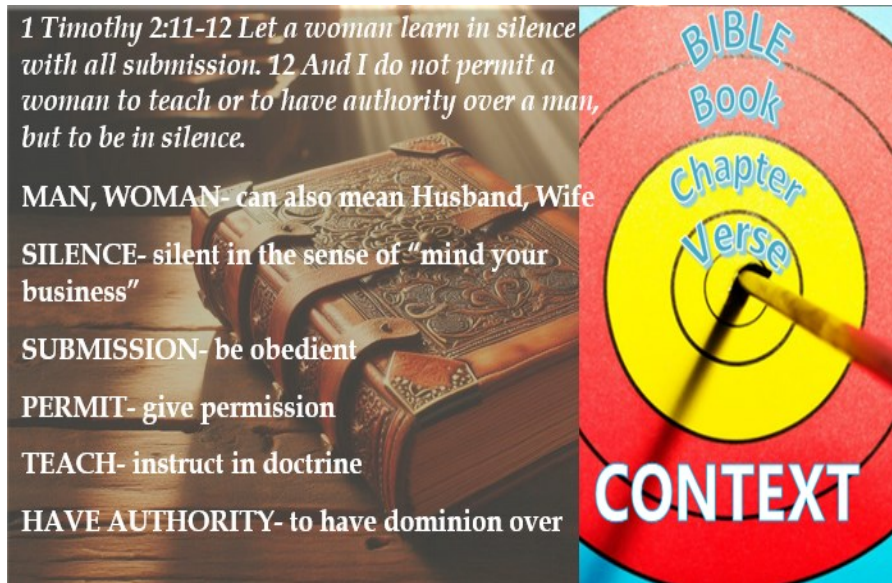
When we encounter something in Scripture that seems strange to us or catches our attention, think of that as a nudge from God to dig a little deeper in that area. When those opportunities arise,

these are three keys that will help us tremendously. These 3 flow into each other and help expand what's being presented to us. This is a basic form of what's called Biblical Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study of the principles and methods of interpreting Scripture. Let's look at each of these a little closer and see examples of how we can practice and apply them to our personal study of God's Word.

The understanding of the verse must be viewed in the context of the chapter it's written in, which must be viewed in the context of the book it's written in, which must be viewed in the context of the entire Bible.



All of these must line up in 1 accord and not contradict each other for our understanding of the verse to be legitimate. If even one of these “rings of context” is off, that lets us know our understanding is off concerning that verse. Let’s look at an example...



This verse, (along with one other that we’ll look at in this study) is often interpreted in many denominations and churches to mean that women are diminished when it comes to ministry. That women can’t preach the gospel

or teach the truth in a group setting if men are present. They must be silent.

Does that interpretation, (we’ll call it the “silent women” interpretation,) line up with proper hermeneutics? Before we move forward, I want to say that this study may get a bit uncomfortable, (not too much), but anytime we create an opportunity to see scripture in a different perspective, it’s bound to be uncomfortable for some of us. That’s ok. It’s how we grow.

I intentionally chose this verse because it’s one of those verses that causes controversy and contention, so it’s a good example to practice proper hermeneutics. That way we can defend, not just WHAT we believe, but more importantly, WHY we believe it.

First, we’ll look at the verse, which means we’ll break down the relevant words in their original language, (in this case Greek), and see if that supports or contradicts that interpretation.

These are the words we'll focus on because they set the tone. I've included a short definition of each word, but feel free to check your concordance and double check me.

**MAN, WOMAN**- can also mean Husband, Wife \*

**SILENCE**- silent in the sense of "mind your own business"

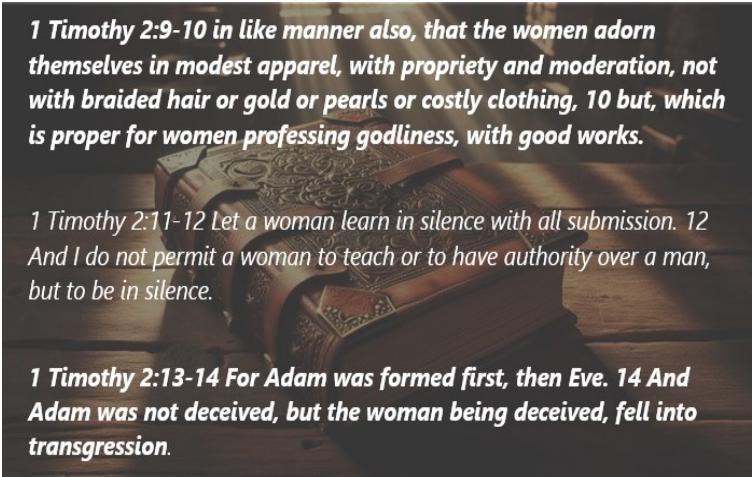
**SUBMISSION**- be obedient

**PERMIT**- give permission

**TEACH**- instruct in doctrine \*

**HAVE AUTHORITY**- to have dominion over \*

So far, although some of the words seem interesting, the original language doesn't disagree with the "silent women" interpretation, and there's no contradiction created, so we continue with our rings of context. The next ring in the bullseye is to look at the chapter, meaning we investigate the verses before and after and see if they can offer some understanding.



*1 Timothy 2:9-10 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, 10 but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.*

*1 Timothy 2:11-12 Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. 12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.*

*1 Timothy 2:13-14 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*

These are the verses directly before and after the verses that we're investigating. So, what if anything, do they reveal?

First, take note of how Paul states in verse 9 that women shouldn't wear braids or jewelry or expensive clothes.

I'd like to point out that some of the same denominations that hold the "silent women" interpretation have no problem with women wearing braids and jewelry and expensive clothes. Aside from it making Paul seem a little too concerned with how women look, the verses before don't really oppose the "silent women" interpretation. But we have to ask ourselves, why did Paul specifically mention braids and jewelry and fine clothes? There are a lot of hairstyles for women, even back in those days, but he intentionally said braids.

Weird... I feel like there's something important being addressed here, maybe we'll get some clarity as we go through the process of hermeneutics.

Moving on to the verses after, they do make the point that Eve was deceived by the serpent, therefore, Paul **must** be saying that because the woman was deceived, then **no** woman can be trusted with teaching or preaching. However, if we use some critical thought, these 2 verses are a little out of place to be used to support women being silent because Eve was indeed deceived, ... but Adam wasn't.

Adam willingly failed God and Paul says as much in other scriptures. So, while these 2 verses seem to offer a reason for the "silent women" interpretation, we have to ask ourselves another question, "why is Paul mentioning Adam and Eve here?" It seems like there are some puzzle pieces in here that we just can't fit together yet, from the "man/woman-husband/wife" paradigm, to the "have dominion over" word meaning, to the braids, and now to Adam and Eve.

Nothing we've looked at challenges the "Silent women" interpretation, but it seems like something is being said just beneath the surface. Sort of like inside information that was directed to specific people. Hopefully this will all come together and make sense by the end of our study.

Regardless, there's no challenge or contradiction created, so we move to the next ring of context, which is the chapter. 1 Timothy chapter 2 is a small chapter with only 15 verses. Feel free to double-check me, but nothing in the rest of the chapter gives us any clarity in the "interpretation" we're studying, so we'll move to the Book of 1 Timothy, which is actually a letter Paul wrote in response to a letter Timothy first wrote to Paul about the problems he was facing as the Bishop of Ephesus. If only we had that letter.

To save us some time, I read the rest of 1 Timothy to check the context of the next ring, which is "the book" that the chapter is written in. While it contains some awesome instruction, including a prophecy in chapter 4, nothing else in the book offers any clarity of the "silent women" interpretation. Again, feel free to double-check me.



So far, everything seems to line up with that interpretation, so we'll move on to the next step in the hermeneutical process, CROSS REFERENCE.

One way to cross reference is by searching for relevant and related words in a concordance or cross reference Bible. In our case, the relevant and related words will be silent and women. And that's where we seem to hit a brick wall...

## CROSS REFERENCE WORDS

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 Let your **women keep silent in the churches**, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. 35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is **shameful for women to speak in church**.

We've practiced two of the 3 steps of Hermeneutics that we learned earlier. We dug into the "rings of context", which didn't offer any challenge to the "silent women" interpretation, and we've cross

referenced the verse, which led us to another verse that practically says the same thing, so all we have left to check is the culture, and the way it's going I'm not sure we're gonna find anything different there... but wait... we haven't fully cross referenced the topic of women in ministry, only the words of women being silent in church.

I think this is where most folks that hold that view stop the hermeneutical process. They dig into the context and find no argument. Then they cross reference the words and find this scripture, and that's it. End of story. Women have to be silent in church. Paul said it twice, so that interpretation must be correct.

We're not gonna stop there. We'll move on to the entire Bible and search the topic of women in ministry. If we hold a belief that we see as Biblically based, then it stands to reason that it should be based on the entire Bible. If we truly believe the Bible doesn't contradict itself, that the New Testament doesn't contradict the Old Testament, that God is the same "yesterday, today, and forever", then we need to make sure our beliefs and our understanding of Scripture lines up with what the Bible actually teaches

from Genesis to Revelation. Line upon line, precept upon precept. And that's what we're gonna do here.

## CROSS REFERENCE TOPIC

Our next step in the hermeneutical process is to cross reference verses that shed some light on the particular **topic** we're studying. For our topic of the "silent women" interpretation, we'll go first to the O.T. and see what we can learn. The O.T. teaches us a lot about the role of women in God's Kingdom. Here are some examples:

- Moses' sister Miriam is called a prophetess in Ex 15:20 and God includes her in a leadership role with Moses and Aaron in Micah 6:4
- In Judges 4:4-10 Deborah is a Judge of Israel and crucial in advising Barak, the commander of the Israelite army, and directing the military campaign against the Canaanites.

Some might say, "well sure, Miriam helped lead God's people out of Egypt and Deborah helped lead God's people in war, but that doesn't mean YHWH would have a woman help when it comes to teaching and preaching His Word, especially not to a man." What if I told you that's exactly what happened, but it wasn't just any man, it was a high priest of YHWH.

**2 Kings 22:12-17** <sup>12</sup> *Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, <sup>13</sup> "Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."*

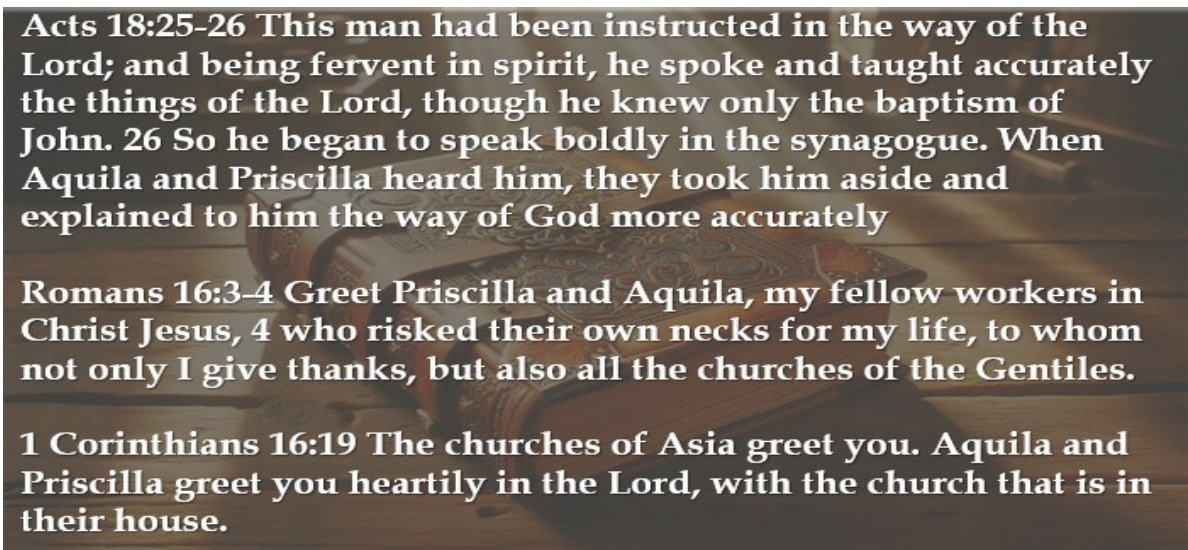
<sup>14</sup> *So Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her. <sup>15</sup> Then she said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, <sup>16</sup> "Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read— <sup>17</sup> because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.'*

I encourage you to read this entire episode, but to give some background, Josiah king of Judah wanted to do some "spring cleaning" to the temple in Jerusalem. He sent Hilkiah the high priest to oversee the project. Hilkiah found the Book of the Law and sent it to Josiah. Apparently, from the time of Solomon to the time Josiah, about 300 years, Judah had forgotten all about the Law of God and had fallen into apostasy. This really upset the king. So, when the Book of the Law was found, it was a big deal.

Notice that King Josiah tells Hilkiah to seek God's will in the matter, and the first thing the High Priest does is to go find Huldah. She teaches and preaches the spoken Word of God, about the written Word of God, using the literal Word of God, to this man who happens to be the high priest of God. If you read the full exchange, you won't see the high priest telling Huldah to be silent. You won't see him asking anything from Huldah's husband Shullah.

So how does that line up with Paul's words in the N.T.? Did God change His mind from the O.T. to the N.T.? Was Huldah out of line by speaking for God or was Paul misguided when he said women should be silent?

Now we have a perceived contradiction between an account in the O.T. and an epistle in the N.T. When we encounter a perceived contradiction, even between the 2 testaments, it's our duty as followers of God's Word to reconcile it, to make it make sense. Let's cross reference some N.T. verses and see if we can shed some light on this situation.



**Acts 18:25-26** This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately

**Romans 16:3-4** Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

**1 Corinthians 16:19** The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

The back story of the 2 verses in Acts 18 is that a man named Apollos was preaching in Ephesus when Aquilla and his wife Priscilla happened to be there. He did a good job, but Aquilla and Priscilla wanted to teach him to more accurately preach the Way. Notice it says BOTH taught Apollos, not just Aquilla. The verse in Romans 16 has Paul listing both Aquilla AND Priscilla as equals with him. That sounds very different from what he said in 1 Cor 14.

Speaking of 1 Cor, 2 chapters after Paul tells the Corinthian women to be silent in church, he mentions the church that Aquilla and Priscilla lead... IN THEIR HOME. Are we to assume that Priscilla, who helped teach Apollos and who Paul considered an equal in the work of the Kingdom, was silent in her own home? What are we missing? Why does Paul seem to be flip flopping?

Let's look at another example. Interestingly, it's also found in Romans 16, the same chapter where Paul calls Priscilla and Aquilla fellow workers.

Romans 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,

Colossians 1:25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

Strong's Definitions [?] (Strong's Definitions Legend)

διάκονος **diákonos**, dee-ak'-on-os; probably from an obsolete διάκω **diákō** (to run on errands; compare G1377); an attendant, i.e. (genitive case) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); specially, a Christian teacher and pastor (technically, a deacon or deaconess):—deacon, minister, servant.

In Romans 16, Paul commends Phoebe and calls her a servant of the church. Then in Colossians 1:25, he calls himself a minister. Minister Paul. That sounds legitimate. Paul

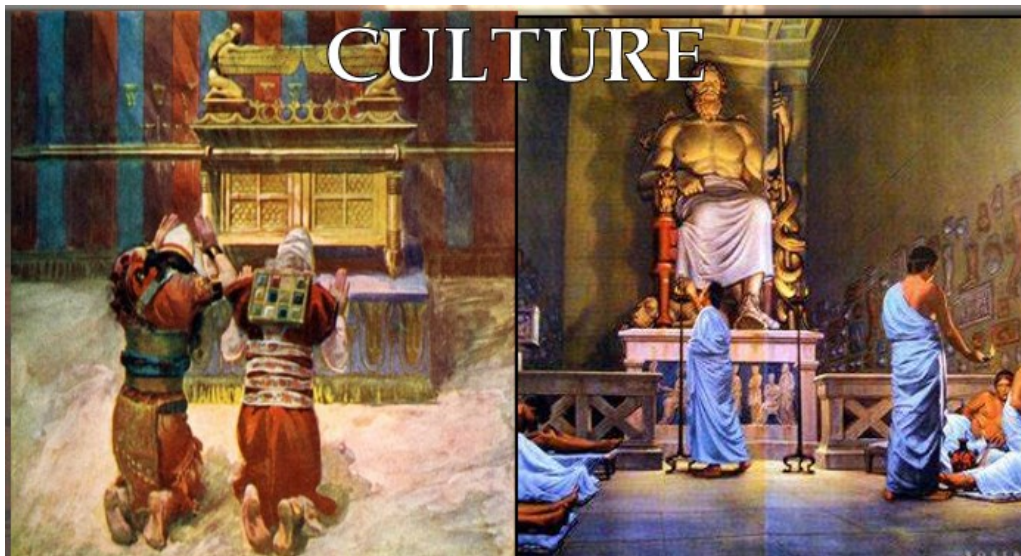
was definitely a minister of the church, and Phoebe was a servant of the church. Sounds like she would silently clean up after everyone. The thing is... the two words servant and minister are actually the exact same word in Greek

That Greek word is DIAKONOS, and it's where we get the word Deacon from. Paul actually calls her a DIAKONOS of the church, and the KJV scribes translated it as servant in Romans 16.



In this verse, Paul uses the same word, DIAKONOS, to describe himself. But in Col 1:25, the KJV scribes translated it as "minister". I'm not sure why they chose to translate the same word in two different ways, that have two different meanings, especially in England in the 1600's, but there it is. One carries mission and purpose and the other carries pots and pans.

While these verses have revealed a different view on how Paul sees women in ministry, they haven't reconciled the seeming contradiction between the verses in the O.T. and Paul's statements in 1 Timothy or 1 Cor. If anything, these N.T. verses seem to create even more contradiction, especially in Paul's own words. So how do we reconcile this? How do we make sense of all this? Well, you'll have to go to the next study in our series to find out, because we still have one more Hermeneutical step to take in the process, and boy is it a doozy. It holds the key that unlocks all this mess and untangles all these knots. The dots will be connected and those weird things Paul mentioned in those verses will become clear. The final step is...



In the next study of our "Sharpening the Sword" series, we'll really dig into this aspect of Hermeneutics, so don't miss it. Amen