

Women in Ministry Report / Elder's Policy on Preaching at Grace

Executive Summary

Several years ago the Bible Fellowship Church (BFC), of which Grace is a part, undertook the question of whether women should be permitted to preach and teach when the church was gathered. The denomination has always had only men in the office of elder, and elders in the past were typically the preachers and teachers. So as that changed over the years, they felt it important to answer the question about women teaching and preaching. The denomination wound up having diverse perspectives on that and initially decided to make no statement collectively and instead leave it to individual churches to answer the question.

In the summer of 2024, The Elders at Grace asked a group of wise and gifted men and women from our church to prayerfully study the issue and report back to the Elders. They spent the better part of 9 months doing that. The Elders then took up a 9-month study of key passages and careful consideration of the committee's recommendations.

In the midst of the Elder's deliberations the denomination as a whole decided to take back the issue and decide collectively on the matter. As there was still diverse perspectives, they arrived at something of a compromise position. They decided to make no statements or restrictions on women teaching in the broader life of the church but did decide to reserve the preaching of sermons on the Lord's Day for qualified men as they saw a unique authority in the Sunday sermon.

With this in mind, and with the committee's report and the Elder's study also in mind, in January 2026 the Elder's set a policy in place not just on who in general can preach but how we will appropriately vet and oversee anyone who preaches at Grace.

Documents Attached:

- Full report of the Grace Women in Ministry Committee, Submitted March 2025
- Preaching Policy of the Grace Elders, approved January 2026
- BFC Article on Preaching, fully enacted April 2026

Additional Documents:

- BFC Study Committee on Role of Women, 2023 BFC Yearbook
(You can download yearbook [HERE](#), reports begin on pages 154 & 173)

REPORT of the WOMEN in MINISTRY COMMITTEE

SUBMITTED to the BOARD OF ELDERS – MARCH 2025

REVIEW of OUR ASSIGNMENT

In the summer of 2024, our committee was tasked by the elders to examine whether or not the Scriptures prohibit women from preaching/teaching in the gathered assembly of the church. The impetus for this came on the denominational end. The Bible Fellowship Church at large has always been convicted that the New Testament reserves the role of Elder for men. But that doesn't necessarily answer the question of whether or not God gifts and invites women to preach and teach in corporate gatherings of the church. Back "in the day", it was typically just the elders who did the preaching and teaching when the church gathered. So, the question never really came up. But such isn't the case anymore. On occasion, we at Grace will invite non-elders to open God's word from the pulpit on a Sunday morning. And so, the unanswered question was, can we invite a gifted non-elder woman to do the same? The denomination as a whole first assigned a study committee to prayerfully study and address that question. The committee came back split - half answering yes, half answering no, each providing detailed and faithful rationale from Scripture to support their conclusion. And when their report was brought to the denomination for a decision, the result was the same - half felt Scripture welcomed women to teach, half felt it did not. So it was left to the individual churches to prayerfully decide the question for themselves. To help answer that question here at Grace, the elders tasked our committee to investigate the question.

REVIEW of OUR WORK:

- We took the summer mainly to read over various materials including the following:
 - The two (majority and minority) reports submitted to BFC Conference by the committee appointed to consider the question on the denominational side.
 - The Fresh Perspectives on Ministry series (three booklets written by conservative writers/theologians from various viewpoints)
 - *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles: A Case for Gender Roles in Ministry* – Kathy Keller
 - *Bourgeois Babes, Bossy Wives, and Bobby Haircuts: A Case for Gender Equality in Ministry* – Michael Bird
 - *Hearing Her Voice, Revised Edition: A Case for Women Giving Sermons* – John Dickson
 - The NIVAC Commentary on 1 Timothy 2, by Walter L. Liefeld
 - Small research assignments given to the various committee members
 - I.e. how does *teaching* differ from *exhorting*
 - We also briefly surveyed a couple other articles as they related to questions we were coming across
 - *1 Corinthians 11:2–16: An Interpretation* – Bruce K. Waltke
 - *Public Roles For Women In The Pauline Church* – James G. Sigountos
 - *Towards a Definition of New Testament Prophecy* – Richard M. Blaylock
- We met five times mainly throughout the fall to discuss
 - the readings and come to an understanding of the various perspectives
 - the text – primary 1 Timothy 2
 - how the Spirit, Scriptures, and Church thinkers were shaping and challenging our own individual thinking on the matter

OUR TEXT - 1 TIMOTHY 2:12 - *I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.*

When it comes to the question of whether we ought to prohibit women from teaching in the context of the gathered church, there really is just one text, perhaps just one verse, that speaks *directly* to the issue. That's not to say that we don't consider the whole counsel of Scripture when answering this question. It's more to say that apart from this text, one could reasonably come to various conclusions based on the witness of Scripture. One might notice that there are no women priests or women named among the first disciples of Jesus and the founders of the church and thus assume that teaching with any degree of authority is not something God intends women to do. Someone else may notice in the New Testament that women were expected to exhort, prophesy, and evangelize in the gathered assembly and thus conclude that a woman could indeed deliver a sermon that proclaimed the gospel, called out the hidden sins of the church, and exhorted the congregation to renounce sin and live as faithful followers of Jesus. So again, to answer our question, we focused primarily on Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2.

And if all we had were 1 Timothy 2:12, the answer might seem rather simple. But when we broaden out just a few verses and include the rest of the chapter, we quickly realize this is not a cut and dry case. It's a tricky passage that includes questions of posture and clothing and hairstyle when praying in the assembly, the odd qualification "*I do not permit*" that rarely if ever shows up elsewhere in Paul's instructions, and the strange salvific power of childbirth in the lives of faithful women. Even within the one verse itself, we have a Greek word that is used nowhere else in the New Testament, making it difficult to translate. So not only do we have only one passage to consider, but it's anything but a plain and simple passage¹. This all makes for a challenging assignment. And we soon understood why the denomination couldn't come to a clear consensus and felt it unwise to impose one authoritative reading of this passage upon all the churches.

There are generally three understandings of Paul's prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:12. We will summarize them here.

1) *No teaching in the gathered assembly of the church when men are present AND no exercising authority over men*

Advocates for this view would say that this is the simplest and most plain reading of the text. They would argue that God has built into His created order specific roles and gifts assigned to each gender. Women, for example, have the sacred calling and ability to bear life into the world through childbirth. No measure of cultural revolution or gender reassigning can change this profound identity and calling from God given to women. And as women bear and nurture life in their families, men are called to shepherd and lead that life towards the holiness and blessings of God. And so when the church gathers for worship, it is not a time for women to exercise authority over the men who are present OR a time to teach that assembly of both men and women. To do so would, at best, blur the unique giftedness and roles God intends for men and women. At worst, it would subvert the way God structures the home and church.

¹ Granted, if you asked any one of us individually, we might say that it seems pretty clear. But given the diverse conclusions of not only our committee, but also the denomination and the conservative evangelical world at large, it seems warranted to conclude that this passage is not clear and simple.

This is why Paul justifies his instructions by pointing to the created order in verses 13-14. Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam's position as the one who names, leads, and protects was established in his formation. Eve's position as the one who nurtures, helps, and supports was established in her formation.² Again, these distinctions are to be honored and preserved both in the nuclear family and in the family of Christ. So just as in the home a woman ought not assume authority over her husband, so in the church, she ought not assume that authority over her husband or other men.

And, as proponents of this position would argue, teaching implies a certain authority. "The basic definition of the Greek word *didasko* is to give another person information or instruction, which inherently implies authority. No teacher teaches without this authority over his or her students, pupils, or disciples. To teach is to exercise some measure of authority."³

This position would argue that just as we in the BFC, based on this passage, are convicted that the authoritative office of the elder should be reserved for men, we should also reserve the business of teaching the gathered assembly, which by nature carries some measure of authority, to men.

This view would leave open the very real possibility that there were unique abuses of this created order throughout Ephesian culture that had sifted its way into the church and needed to be called out as Paul gives his instructions to Timothy. But, Paul also mentions later that his instructions to Timothy are aimed at how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). So there is no reason not to assume we are to apply his instructions in our churches today.

2) *No assuming unauthorized authority to teach the men*

This view takes one small, yet significant, issue with the perspective above and also claims there is an important function of the Greek grammar in the verse that we shouldn't overlook in the name of preserving the plain reading of the English text.

So, first of all, this view would take exception to the argument that all teaching implies a certain authority. A conservative politician might choose to sit and listen to the arguments of a liberal, all the while withholding any sense of authority from the speaker. A Christian student at Penn or Drexel might take a philosophy class and sit under the teaching of a secular humanist but not grant that professor any authority over his own life and thinking. Which leads to the second concern – careful consideration of the Greek grammar indicates, according to this view, that Paul's concern here is NOT with teaching in general, but with teaching done as an exercise of assumed authority by the speaker. Or in other words, the prohibition is against women *teaching authoritatively*.

² BFC Minority report – page 179

³ Ibid. 182

The question is, does Paul prohibit two things: teaching *and* exercising authority? Or are these two concepts to be combined into one prohibition? Here is where the grammar gee...(ahem) experts, come in. If I said “this coffee is good and hot,” I’m not necessarily saying its good coffee. It might taste like two-day-old diner coffee (bleh), but if it burns my tongue, it is still acceptable to say good and hot in the English language because we all know it means *very hot* when we combine the two words. Or when Macbeth claims upon hearing news of his wife’s death that “life is...a tale told by idiots, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,” we know from the context that Shakespeare uses the phrase to mean that life is full of *furios sound*. This is what is called in grammar books a *hendiadys*.

There are various examples of this throughout Scripture. In Mark 11:24, we read in our English Bibles, “whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it.” But in the actual Greek, it is a hendiadys that reads *whatever you pray and ask* (ὅσα προσεύχεσθε **καὶ** αἰτεῖσθε). Our English translators rightly recognize there a hendiadys and combine the two concepts into one idea. And scholars will note that just about every time Paul links two mutually exclusive but similar concepts with the conjunction *oude* (*or/nor*), he intends for them to convey a single idea. This becomes even more the trend whenever Paul joins two concepts or phrases and then contrasts them with a negative clause using another conjunction (*alla*). He does this quite often actually. Galatians 1:1 for instance: “Paul, an apostle – not from men nor (*oude*) through men, but (*alla*) through Jesus Christ.” Or later in verses 1:10-11: For I did not receive it from any man, nor (*oude*) was I taught it, but (*alla*) I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

For those who aren’t part of the grammar police and geek out on all the nuanced ways grammatical tools are employed, the important thing to know is simply that whenever Paul links two concepts together and sharply contrasts it with one other concept, the overwhelming majority of the time his intent is for the two on the front end to form one basic concept or idea, not two. So when he does the same thing in 1 Timothy 2:12 and says, I do not permit a woman to teach or (*oude*) exercise authority over a man, rather (*alla*) she is to remain quiet, he is not laying out two prohibitions (teach AND exercise authority) but is linking the two concepts together to form one main concern (teach with authority).⁴

BUT, one would likely ask, if the two phrases on the front end form one concept *that sharply contrasts* with the one phrase on the back end (“rather, she is to remain quiet”), then how could we assume a women is allowed to teach at all, or at least whenever

⁴ You can easily see Paul’s tendency to combine largely synonymous words to say something important twice just by reading through the first few verses of chapter 2.

*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions,
and thanksgivings be made for all people,
 for kings **and** all who are in high positions,
 that we may lead a peaceful **and** quiet life,
 godly **and** dignified in every way.*

*This is good, **and** it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior.*

Though not the exact same grammatical construct it that is being presented (here using the Greek word *kai* instead of *oude*), it is a similar tendency of his.

men are present? Shouldn't she remain quiet when there are men in the assembly? This is where we have to point out that the particular Greek word that gets translated *exercise authority* (*authentein*) doesn't show up anywhere else in the New Testament. And given Paul could've used a more standard word for "exercising authority" (*exousia*), it is likely that Paul intends something more nuanced than simply, "exercise authority." Best we can tell, the Greek word, *authentein* refers more to "*assuming* authority" or perhaps more harshly even "*seizing* authority". Hence the NIV translation, "assume authority over a man", or the King James, "usurp authority."

It is also important to remember that this is not the first time Paul urges "quietness" in this passage. In verse two, he urges everyone, including himself even, to live peaceful and quiet lives. This is the sense with which we ought to read the admonition to quietness on the back end of our verse in question. If there are certain persons "devoting themselves to myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations" and are teaching "different doctrines" (1:3-4), if there are young widows going house to house gossiping and saying things they ought not (5:13) perhaps to lead other young women astray (2 Tim. 3:6), and if this was perhaps remotely characteristic of dynamics in the broader Ephesian culture, then it is very plausible to maintain that Paul's concern here is that women not assume unauthorized authority to teach the men and so provoke division and bring dishonor to the men. Rather, they should learn in quiet and peacefulness.

Or put more simply, the prohibition does not preclude those in authority from inviting a woman to teach *in submission to their doctrine and authority*. It precludes women from simply assuming or seizing their own authority to teach in the gathered assembly.

Granted, this may seem to some like high level grammar and perhaps even a reckless deconstruction of Paul's plain and simple commands in order to make it more culturally acceptable to today's audience. But actually, our earliest commentaries on this passage from the ancient church, those which are much closer to Paul and might best understand both the Greek grammar and his intent, seem to agree that Paul intends a single prohibition, that of women *assuming* unauthorized authority to teach the men⁵. And considering that many, if not most, conservative (complementarian) scholars of the Greek text today also affirm this intent, we ought not simply dismiss this reading of the text in favor of an interpretation that seems more plain to our modern English ears.

The implication of this reading is that a woman ought not be given any individual authority over the full church, especially in matters of teaching sound doctrine. That remains the responsibility of the male elders. But if those elders recognize that a certain woman is gifted in areas of communication and teaching, they very well may ask her to teach or preach a message that conveys their understanding of Scripture and doctrine. The key being, she would not teach on her own authority but rather in full submission to the leadership of the elders. Just as in the home a father/husband may ask the mother/wife to teach and instruct their children all-the-while in submission to his conviction of what is true and right, so elders of the church may ask a woman (just

⁵ Origen and Chrysostom

as they may ask a non-elder man) to teach others, not under her own authority but in full submission to their conviction of what is true and right for the congregation.

3) *Teach, period*

A third view on the text would be more in agreement with the first view - that Paul does intend two prohibitions (no teaching and no exercising authority over a man). But this view notices that the teaching prohibition is not clarified in the text to being simply in relation to men. The exercising authority clause certainly is, but teaching is simply left as is. The instruction seems to be, no teaching in the church, period. This view sees Paul using a very clear structure to make his argument – a positive instruction followed by an example of what not to do followed by a reiteration of the positive command.

- So with regards to ATTIRE and PRESENTATION (2:9-10):
 - Positive instruction - *adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control*
 - Example of what not to do – *no braided hair, gold, pearls, or costly attire*
 - Reiteration of the positive instruction – *but with what is proper for women who profess godliness – with good works.*
- With regards to LEARNING (2:11-12)
 - Positive instruction - *Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness*
 - Example of what not to do – *no teaching and no exercising of authority over a man*
 1. Note how these two negative instructions directly correspond to the positive ones - Women should learn quietly (not teach) and they should learn with all submissiveness (not exercising authority over a man)
 - Reiteration of the positive instruction – *She is to remain quiet*

So when it comes to teaching, this view maintains that Paul's concern is not just about women teaching in contexts where there are men present. His main concern is that they learn quietly and remain silent. Teaching, period, is an example of what NOT to do. Similarly, as they are to learn with submissiveness, they ought not be put in positions of authority over men. Taking the text simply at face value, it would appear Paul was not ok with women teaching other women or children in Ephesus. He wanted them to remain quiet/silent and instead learn. According to this view, the issue in the subsequent verses (when Paul references Adam and Eve) is not about so much about order and authority in the home but about Eve being deceived and becoming a transgressor, not Adam. Since that is the case, Paul desires the women to learn in quietness and submission, not teach those who might be most impressionable and vulnerable like children.

This view also points out a possible inconsistency in conservative church practice. If this structure of the text is accurate, then it would seem inconsistent to say that Paul's *example of what not to do* with regards to PRESENTATION is purely a cultural outworking of what a peaceful and godly life should look like, but *the example of what not to do* with regards to LEARNING/TEACHING is timeless and universal. Both *examples of what not to do* are either practical ways to live out his main concern for the presentation of the gospel in a specific context (Ephesus) or they are both timeless

instructions for churches everywhere. In other words, we ought to treat the business of women teaching the same way we do the business of them wearing braids, jewelry, and costly attire. They are either culturally conditioned ways to present a life of dignity and peacefulness (and thus open to change depending on the context) or they are unconditional examples of godly living.

This view also notices how throughout chapters 1 and 2, Paul's overriding concern is about the presentation of the gospel by the church in a pagan society. He is not here mainly providing instruction for how churches ought to be structured and organized (ecclesiology), he is providing instruction on how the church ought to adorn the gospel by not being unnecessarily offensive to the culture it ministers to (missiology). In a patriarchal society, women in authority or women teaching would have been odd at best, offensive at worst. So, it is certainly possible that Paul intends these specific prohibitions for the church in Ephesus all-the-while being open to women teaching in other cities/contexts where it might not be so disturbing to the surrounding culture.

This would not be the only time Paul does this sort of thing. When it comes circumcision, for instance, Paul strongly prohibits Titus from being circumcised in Galatia precisely because it would have been an affront to the gospel in that culture. But when in Jerusalem, Paul has Timothy circumcised so as to not offend the Jews. If prohibitions on circumcision, a very significant identity marker of God's people throughout the Old Testament, can be cultural for Paul in the time of the New Testament, it is reasonable to assume that the prohibitions placed on women could also be tied to specific cultures and contexts⁶. So this view would hold that Paul prohibits women from teaching at all in Ephesus all the while expecting women to exhort in Rome (Romans 12:6-8) or prophesy in Corinth (1 Cor. 11:3-16) or teach the younger women on the Island of Crete (Titus 2:4-5).

SO...WHAT?

As mentioned in the intro to this section, this passage is not crystal clear. Very Godly, Spirit-filled individuals whose primary concern is to be faithful to the Scriptures and see the Church live and operate according to God's design differ on how this one verse (2:12) was intended and ought to be applied in the church. The conservative world at large differs. The BFC differs. And our committee wound up differing as well. There were members of our committee aligned with each option presented above and gave compelling and consistent reasons for why they felt their view was most accurate and faithful to the text.

To be clear on what we all agree on: (1) All three views see a clear prohibition against women exercising the authority of an elder in the church. And (2), all three views see teaching as some part of that prohibition. Option 1 one sees the prohibition as being anytime the church is gathered and men are present. Option 2 sees the prohibition being only teaching that is not done in full submission to the authority of the elders. Option 3 sees the prohibition being against all forms of teaching in the church (including with other women and children) but leaves open the likelihood that these were instructions unique to the Ephesian context.

⁶ One might also mention here the business of eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols. In certain contexts, it seems ok for Paul. In other contexts, its not ok. (i.e. 1 Cor. 8)

Volumes have been written to support each of the views mentioned above. The committee's primary concern at this point would be that the elders not simply dismiss two of the views out of hand because they've always ascribed personally to the other view. In our minds, this leaves the elders open to the charge of apathy at best, sexism at worst.

OTHER ISSUES WE LOOKED INTO AND FEEL IT WORTH ELDERS BEING AWARE OF:

1. When writing to the church in Corinth, Paul seems to expect that women will prophesy in the corporate gathering (1 Co. 11). And when he later defines what prophesy is and does in the life of the Church, he says it builds up (edifies), encourages (exhorts), and comforts (consoles). This raises an important question: if Paul expects that a woman will stand in the corporate gathering of the Body and deliver a word from Christ Himself that is meant for the edification, encouragement, and consolation of the Church, he must have a nuanced understanding of what "teaching" involves if his intention in 1 Timothy is to prohibit women from doing it in all the churches (or at least a more nuanced understanding than we modern folk tend to have). This is, at least in part, why certain writers/commentators feel Paul is only prohibiting teaching that is done as an act of seizing or assuming authority over the Body (see #2 in the list of interpretations of 1 Tim. 2 above). This could also be why Paul instructs women who prophesy or pray in the corporate gathering to cover their heads as a sign of submission to their husbands who may be present in that assembly⁷. We also read a conservative New Testament scholar (John Dickson) who felt that this all illustrates the fact that Paul is using "teach" in 1 Timothy a bit differently than we use it today. Today, "teach" is a catch-all word describing the dispensing of information. In the New Testament Church, argues Dickson, the verb "teach" carries more the specific business of relaying the apostolic doctrine that was handed down to the church in the time before the Scriptures were completed.

The point we wish to highlight here is that if we prohibit women from teaching, an astute reader of Scripture might very well ask a follow up question to the elders: what does it mean then, that they can prophesy and exhort the congregation? Or put another way, Paul never prohibits women from evangelizing, admonishing, or preaching for that matter. So is preaching more closely related to teaching or more closely related to exhorting and prophesying?⁸ Or put yet another way, if our elders are going to prohibit women from teaching in our corporate gatherings, they should also develop clear parameters of what constitutes teaching and what constitutes prophesy, exhortation (see also Romans 12:8), edification and the like so that we are clear not only with regards to what women may NOT do, but what they MAY do. Our people need clarification not only on the negatives (ought not) but also the positives (can do).

⁷ One could argue that Paul's expectation that women cover their heads when praying/prophesying is precisely because he understands that prophesying and exhorting could carry some of the same kind of authority he is concerned about in 1 Timothy 2. We would assume that Paul expects that if Christ speaks a word intended for the Church to a woman or gives a woman the gift of exhortation, then she ought to minister that word/gift to the Body. But she ought also to cover her head as a way of demonstrating she is ministering under and in full submission to the authority God has placed over her in the home.

⁸ For whatever its worth, the two pastor/preachers in our group both felt that their sermons aimed to be more exhortation than teaching (albeit exhortation that would involve explaining the Word).

2. Speaking of head coverings in 1 Corinthians (11:2-16), Paul seems fairly adamant that women ought to cover their heads whenever they pray in a gathering of the church in which their husbands are present. He argues his point extensively from the order of creation. He goes so far as to say that if a woman will not cover her head, she ought to shave her head and so bring upon herself disgrace, not disgrace according to that particular culture, but disgrace according to nature itself.

This raises a real question: how is it that we impose Paul's prohibition against women teaching in the assembly but not his prohibition against women praying with their head uncovered? We can't answer that it's because the prohibition against teaching is backed by principles in the created order. Paul uses those same principles (and more) from the created order to justify the prohibition against praying with heads uncovered.

We could perhaps argue that the command in 1 Timothy is a timeless principle whereas the command in 1 Corinthians is more of a cultural way of showing submission/respect. And since our culture has changed, we can dispense with that prohibition. But we ought to be careful when doing this for a few reasons: (1) It can become very subjective business deciding what is cultural and what is timeless/universal. So there ought at least to be some clear principles applied to how we determine such things. (2) Paul never says it's a cultural command. He is very clear in saying such is a disgrace according to *nature* itself (which is timeless and universal), NOT just an affront to Roman or first century Jewish culture. And (3), it could be to confuse what is principle vs application in 1 Timothy. In 1 Timothy, the principle is NOT no teaching (such that it would be timeless and eternal). The principle is "learn (quietly) in submission." No (authoritative) teaching is an *application*, an example of what they ought not to do in light of the principle being commanded. The point being, if our argument is that applications can be cultural and subjective, then the whole business of teaching authoritatively might itself be cultural and subjective to the context there in Ephesus (see option #3 in the section above).

3. Speaking of cultural considerations, there is actually good reason to be mindful of cultural issues when considering these prohibitions. When reading 1 Timothy 2:12, we ought not take it out of context. And you see his context, his primary concern in all this, stated very clearly in the opening verses of the chapter.
 - a. First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

This whole discussion about women (and men!) comes in a chapter that is not primarily concerned with ecclesiology as it is missiology⁹. At best, Paul is giving a timeless set of

⁹ TITUS 2 is another, perhaps clearer example of this way that Paul often gives church instructions to those he places in authority (Timothy and Titus).

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, 4 and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, **that the word of God may not be reviled**. 6 Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. 7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, 8 and sound

instructions for how we specifically are to conduct ourselves *so that* God's desire to see all people saved is not hindered. But it certainly is fair to wonder if leading a peaceful, quiet, and dignified life in furtherance of God's mission looks differently today, especially as it relates to prohibitions on women in a non-patriarchal society. In other words, given that placing prohibitions on women is actually quite an offense to the outside culture in which we minister the saving gospel of Christ today, is it fair to ask if Paul would be of a different mind if writing to church today¹⁰. This is important in light of the fact that, when it comes to women teaching, 1 Timothy 2:12 contains no actual imperative (there is an imperative related to learning but not teaching). We assume that when Paul states "I do not permit" he wants Timothy to lead accordingly. But it is at the very least curious why he does not give a simple imperative there as he does so often throughout the book in relation to other things. Or, it is fair to wonder why the Holy Spirit would lead Paul to insert the slightest amount of subjectivity into this issue instead of stating a simple, timeless imperative.

RECOMMENDATION of OUR COMMITTEE:

In light of all that has been mentioned above – the complexities of the passage itself, the diversity of perspectives among faithful and Spirit-filled individuals and churches, and the additional questions this issue raises which are not easy to answer – it is our recommendation that the elders make a decision for our church that appeals not just to Scripture, but to three things: (1) Scripture, (2) the tradition and history of the church, and (3) wisdom as it applies to the unity of Grace Church.

We feel that it is very reasonable to maintain a practice here at Grace that only men in authority preach sermons. In keeping with the three principles listed above:

- (1) It is, at the very least, one valid way of understanding Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2. We can, and ought to, humbly admit though that our way of choosing to apply 1 Timothy 2 may not be the 100% correct way to understand it. And considering that, we do not necessarily pass judgment on other churches and individuals who, in good conscience and faithful obedience, are convicted that the passage should be understood differently. In fact, we are bound to demonstrate such humility and grace so long as we are in unity with and in submission to a denomination that affirms those who, based on the Scriptures, are convicted that women ought not be prohibited from occasional preaching.

speech that cannot be condemned, **so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.** 9 Bondservants[b] are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith, **so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.**

¹⁰ Or as one conservative scholar (Walter Liefeld) from our readings put it:

"The vocabulary, grammar, and structure of this section and its context in chapter 2 are seen as one unit. It deals with the importance of leading "peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (v.2), not only as a blessing for Christians but in reaching non-Christians (vv.3-7). This accords with the tone and the goals of the whole Pastoral corpus. Paul intends for Timothy to follow his practice of restricting women, while carefully avoiding putting it into a command for all times and places. The instructions are not limited to the conditions at Ephesus but apply to the whole ancient culture, Jewish and pagan, that regarded it as immoral for women to transcend certain public restrictions. Paul had a missionary purpose, as in 1 Corinthians 9:20, where he "became like one under the law...so as to win those under the law." According to this approach to the passage, the application should facilitate the fulfillment of Paul's missionary purpose in our own social context rather than repeat the same restrictions that were appropriate then but can be a hindrance to conversions now."

- (2) It is a valid application of the text in light of the fact that God's Spirit has led the majority of the church throughout history and around the world to read that passage to imply that women ought not preach sermons in their churches. This view certainly is changing as the world increasingly shifts from a patriarchal society to one in which women share equal authority, opportunity, and responsibility in society. And thus, we would do well to stay informed of how God's Spirit is continuing to lead and convict the church in this area.
- (3) It seems to us (and the elders perhaps ought to verify this) that Grace Church is an assembly of Spirit-filled followers of Christ who would be predominantly convicted that women preaching in a Sunday morning worship service would violate Paul's instructions to Timothy. And since we are instructed from Paul not to unduly offend the conscience of others, especially in the corporate gathering that aims to exalt the glory of God, AND we are encouraged to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we can say that there is legitimate wisdom in reserving the sermons at Grace Church for men in authority. We would do well to keep in mind the sacrifice of submission we would be asking of those among us who are led to understand the passage differently, especially women. The elders should honor those for whom the cost of unity is more sacrificial and difficult.

We also recommend that only elders - those who've been granted the actual authority in Grace Church in matters of doctrine and practical obedience - deliver sermons in our corporate worship service. This seems to us not only a wise practice in itself, but also a helpful way to honor the various readings of 1 Timothy 2 and consistently apply Paul's concern to preserve a proper authority in the church and home. Most of our readings (and perhaps the majority of our committee) felt women should be permitted to do anything in church that non-elder men were permitted to do. So, if we are to prohibit women, we similarly ought to prohibit non-elder men. That said, we understand that this would be something of a sacrifice for us in that the pulpit would no longer be open to seminary students we are developing (i.e. Steven Seal) or individuals in our congregation who perhaps were elders/pastors in other churches but are not currently in ours (i.e. Raj and Nate Sauve) or missionaries who may very well be elders in their churches but not here with our people (i.e. Rick Rhodes, Jerry Moyer, etc). But if we genuinely view the sermon as a ministry that possesses unique authority in the corporate life of Grace Church such that we would say that an elder ought not delegate that authority to a woman, we feel it is a consistent practice that would help maintain unity at Grace if they similarly avoid delegating that authority to a non-elder man.

Our recommendations to the elders are limited to the sermons on the Lord's Day. Amongst the committee members, there are different opinions on whether women should be allowed to teach in other corporate gatherings of the church. Since we did not have a shared perspective on that, we will entrust those decisions to the collective wisdom of the elders. Hopefully we have provided ample information and data from our research to help with those decisions.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS: *(some additional comments for the elders from members of the committee that may or may not all reflect the full consensus of the committee)*

We encourage our elders to understand that having male only elders and male only preachers can subtly convey, especially to our women, far more than we might ever intend. Women in complementarian churches are often reporting a sense of second class importance or that they are servants not just to the direction of the elders but to the men of the church in general. Even at Grace, various women have expressed a certain reluctance to assert themselves in ministries

where they are gifted and fully invited to serve out of a concern that such might be viewed as inappropriate.

We encourage our elders to perhaps go above and beyond to dismantle any lingering sense of “cultural” patriarchy, dare we say sexism, in the Church. We ought to boldly honor the contributions of our women in ministry at Grace. We ought to teach our congregation regularly that women, apart from whatever form (if any) of teaching is determined to be prohibited, can fully serve and use their gifts in whatever ways non-elder men can, that their voices carry no less truth or wisdom than men, that our Church’s very life and health depends on us valuing and employing their Spirit-given gifts as much as those of our men.

We also understand fully that cultural tides and tendencies from various ideological camps can influence the church. Thus you all carry the solemn responsibility to guard Grace Church from shifting with whatever tides may come. You bear the responsibility at times to stand against the tide and assure that our life and worship together as a Church best reflects how God has revealed His intent for us. And so we commit ourselves to pray for you, our elders, as you weigh our report and lead us in faithfully fulfilling our calling as Christ’s church. We thank you for the privilege to serve in this manner and fully submit ourselves to however the Spirit leads you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole Harper

Kayleigh Kaiser

Sandy Miller

Elizabeth Piasecki

Mike Plourde

Nate Sauve

Simone Sauve (auditor)

Jon Schmidt (secretary)

Scott Simmons

Aaron Susek (chair)

Who Can Preach at Grace

~ Adopted by the Elders of Grace Church Wallingford on January 20, 2026 ~

Whereas the Elders of Grace Church desire to put in place a more defined process for approving those who would preach in the Sunday gathering of the church at Grace, and

Whereas one of the key questions that was, at the time, unanswered by the BFC denomination, was whether to include women in the preaching of the Word, and

Whereas the Elders appointed a committee of gifted men and women in the congregation to study this question, who did present to the Elders a well-researched and thoughtful report of their study, and

Whereas the Elders then embarked on a year of discussions around that report, with special consideration given to key passages in the book of 1 Timothy, and

Whereas the Elders generally agreed with the overall exegesis and summary of conservative approaches that the committee presented, including the committee's conclusion that "In light of ... the complexities of the passage itself, the diversity of perspectives among faithful and Spirit-filled individuals and churches, and the additional questions this issue raises which are not easy to answer – it is our recommendation that the elders make a decision for our church that appeals not just to Scripture, but to three things: (1) Scripture, (2) the tradition and history of the church, and (3) wisdom as it applies to the unity of Grace Church.", and

Whereas the Elders generally agreed with the understanding of the committee that a key element to applying 1 Timothy revolves around who has authority over the congregation, and how, if ever, that can be delegated, and

Whereas the Elders felt that that committee's recommendation to, at this time, limit preaching to those who are actively serving in the role of Elder at Grace, was too restrictive, not allowing for any delegation of the Elder's authority to others, and

Whereas the Elders, upon careful consideration of the Scripture, the tradition and history of the church, and wisdom as it applies to the unity of Grace, believe that the primary preaching in the weekly gathering of God's people at Grace should be done by men, and

Whereas the Bible Fellowship Church is in the midst of voting on legislation that would further define who can and cannot preach in the Sunday gathering, limiting that preaching to men, and

Whereas the Elders are committed to assuring that anyone who preaches at Grace is clearly under the authority of the Elders and is selected in a way that, to the best of our ability, conforms to Biblical standards, to BFC standards, to honoring the long history of the church, and to the preserving of unity in the body here at Grace, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Elders formally thank the Women's Study Committee for their excellent work, and adopt their overall exegesis and theological conclusions as an appropriate expression of current Biblical thought on the issues raised, and further

RESOLVED that the Elders put in place the following policy regarding preaching in the weekly gathering of God's people (currently our Sunday Morning Worship Service):

- The Elders shall vet all potential preachers ahead of time to assure they trust in Christ for salvation and are actively following the Lord, are men of good Biblical character, are above reproach, are in sympathy with the BFC articles of faith, are qualified according to any BFC standards for preaching, are gifted in teaching, and are willing to submit in their preaching here to the authority of Grace's Elders. Once vetted they shall go on the list of men approved to preach at Grace
- The Senior pastor shall set the preaching schedule, assuring that Grace Pastors fill a majority of the preaching spots, and that all others that are invited to preach are on the list of vetted preachers prior to being formally invited.
- All those invited to preach who are not currently serving as a Pastor or Elder at Grace Church must be on the list of those vetted by the Elders, must be given a copy of the BFC Articles of Faith and agree to preaching and teaching within that framework, and shall be asked to submit an outline of their sermon to one of the Pastors of Grace Church, normally 1-2 weeks in advance of speaking.
- The Elders may revisit the Vetted Preacher's list anytime, adding or removing people as they think wise. Ideally, they should review the list at least once a year.
- The final decision-making authority for who can preach in the primary weekly gathering of God's people rests with the Elders of Grace Church, with the Senior Pastor giving oversight to the overall preaching schedule and guidance to those approved by the Elders to preach.

and further

RESOLVED that the Elders express agreement with the committee on the need to provide encouragement to the women of the church to be using their gifts in appropriate ways throughout the life of the church, including making available and actively supporting growing avenues of service, and further

RESOLVED that the Elders communicate the above to the Women's Study Committee in the coming weeks, welcoming any feedback, and further

RESOLVED that the Elders develop a teaching / communication plan that includes our commitment to Scripture, to church history and to wisdom in regards to unity, and that that be presented to the congregation in early 2026, and that this new preaching policy officially go into effect on March 1, 2026

New BFC Article on Preaching – April 2026

BFC Article on Preaching, Article 404-6, fully enacted April 2026

Preaching and teaching in the church's gathered worship is to be done by qualified men, typically elders or elders in training, and ruling authority is exercised by elders who must give an account to God. Women are not permitted to function as elders over the church. Women are encouraged to exercise their gifts of teaching and administration in God glorifying ways in the life of the body. The Board of Elders of each particular church shall determine such settings in accordance with Scripture.