

Today Counts Show Episode 73

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Hello, everyone, and welcome back to the Today Counts Show. I am picking up from where I left off last time. I've opened up my Bible in the New Testament and I am staring at the first page of this letter that's entitled First Timothy. It's a letter that is written from that ancient leader, the Apostle Paul. We talked about him a little bit last time. Before I begin reading in chapter two, it's a shorter chapter, but it'll probably take half an hour to get through this.

Introduction

People, in general, Fight

Some of the things that I think are important to say about leadership, in general, is that people fight. That's just kind of what we do. We disagree, and the wisdom or lack thereof in our fighting is often because we're focused on the wrong things. We're focused on the non-essentials. We're focused on things that might work itself out in the process, but we don't have the patience to collaborate. We don't have the patience to work through it, so we feel like we have to take a side. We feel like we must know and have a decisive conviction moving forward, versus perhaps a learning posture, a gracious posture.

Leadership is a Dialogue

So, one of the first things I want to say is, I think leadership is a dialogue. I think leadership is a process. I don't think that as a leader, you must know where you stand on everything from A to Z. I do believe that it helps when you know what the core essentials are and you know what you believe about those core essentials, and then you lead from that perspective.

Something I remember my father sharing with me many, many years ago, and I've heard it repeated in different ways since then, but in the history of mankind, we see a pattern, we see a dance between the Divine, the Creator, and the created. And in this dance, God creates good things, but we then get our hands in it and we want to organize it to the nth degree, and in the

process, somehow we end up choking the life out of it. In other words, *God starts something wonderful and then we mess it up.*

The concept of the church and its origins

Another thing I want to say to lay the foundation for this is that I do believe that the church is one of those things. It's one of those things that God created. It's a New Covenant idea, a New Covenant concept. There is the local church, that's your local denomination, that's your local gathering, and then there is the universal or invisible church, and that is a global body of believers. The phrase "Body of Christ" is another term that we use, probably in a broader sense for the local church.

The local church is an organism. It's something that has been mysteriously created by God. There was a prototype, and that came out of the synagogue. And even in that prototype of the synagogue, the synagogue has not always existed either. My understanding of history is that when the Jewish people became captives, they were losing their culture, they were losing their religious understandings of Jehovah God, and so they began creating smaller assemblies that were more agile and therefore, the synagogue was birthed. That might be an oversimplification, yet I think the broader truth is there.

So, a lot of the things that churches practice today do come out of that concept. *But let's also remember that when we talk about society, and then inside society, we talk about religious groups, then inside those religious groups, we have to understand that there's a lot of counterfeit stuff when it comes to darkness and light, good and evil.* For example, in Christianity, we know of a thing called baptism, and that people get baptized. A lot of people, when they traveled to Israel to learn about those early days and walk in the same places that Jesus walked, many of them choose to get baptized, even if they had already been baptized. But baptism is not unique to Christianity. Baptism was something that occurred with other pagan religions.

The Influence of Culture and History on Scripture

So when we open up Scripture or talk about leadership, it's always dripping in history, it's always dripping in culture. So, I say all that just to come back to the idea that in this chapter, some see it as controversial and some don't. Some see it as black and white, some see it differently. There are terms that I might use that maybe you've heard or maybe you haven't heard that I'm going to use today, like complementarian, egalitarian. We're going to be talking about the roles of men and women specifically in the church, but we're going to have to look at culture too. We just have to. I think that's something that we must do. And some of the stuff I'm going to talk about today, I have to tell you, I do not have a strong opinion on because I do not believe it falls into the category of essential beliefs. Now, that's going to be heresy to some because if I'm reading out of scripture, a fundamental Christian thought is that if I'm reading out of scripture, then I must be able to make a decision as to what I believe. But I think that contradicts the whole journey of our spiritual walk and learning more about our creator.

The Proper Use of Power

I think the other thing that I want to say before we begin is that if I were to come up with my own title for this chapter and how it applies to leadership, I would probably title it something like "The Proper Use of Power." The proper use of power. Because though we're going to be talking about teaching and leading and how women should conduct themselves and how men should conduct themselves, the umbrella over all of that or the foundation under all of that, to me, comes back to this proper use of power.

Gender Wars and Historical Context

Let me dive down a little bit deeper. Those who've done research in power would say, generally speaking, there is a different motivation between men pursuing power and women pursuing power. And without understanding this research, the first thing that we're going to tend to do is throw grenades. We're going to have a sexist war. Right? Men are going to throw grenades at women, women are going to throw grenades at men, and I would probably say that some of those grenades are well-deserving on both sides of the ledger. You know, we've had gender wars ever since the Garden of Eden when um, Eve probably resisted, pushed back on this submission to her husband, Adam, and aligned with another force as a way to gain some power. Adam not having the backbone to do what, you know, he needed to do, the deep enough convictions, you know, demonstrated cowardice, and on and on, and that's an oversimplification for that.

Men "Power Over", Women "Power To"

But when we think about men in power, research shows that men usually think of power with the word "over." The preposition "over," power over someone, power over something. In general, I think that's true. Maybe I'll get into that a little bit more. Women, on the other hand, when they think of power, now this is not necessarily conscious, this is maybe an unconscious view, a subconscious view, if you will. Women tend to gather power to. Men power over something, women power to, power to have the rights of, power to transform something, power to change something. And power over is not inherently wrong or evil because there are things that we need to have power over, and power to is not innately evil. But as, let's see, Lord Acton, a British historian once said, "Power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely."

So just before we begin this, I think, for me, this is what I'm seeing because the context of this letter to Timothy was in a day and age where we had all kinds of power forces running into each other. Ephesus was known for a place of sorcery and magic. Shakespeare even makes comments about Ephesus and the culture there. We also have pagan temples there, and then we have the Jewish traditions and religion there, and then we have the way that the Christianity

that is now trying to weave in and out of all of that. So it was quite an explosive arena. People were arrested, people were stoned. I mean, this was a dynamic situation.

1 Timothy 2

So we pick up in the second chapter of First Timothy, and Paul begins with the words "I". "I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men, the testimony given in its proper time. And for this purpose, I was appointed a herald and an apostle — I'm telling the truth, I'm not lying — and a teacher of the true faith in the Gentiles."

Prayer for all people

I could probably talk for a half an hour just on this section here, but let me highlight some things. *You know, I think Paul is literally teaching something kind of new, that believers are people who should be praying for all people. We should be praying for our leaders. I'm not just talking about our national leaders, I'm talking about our leaders at work, our leaders in the community, our leaders at church, even if we disagree with them, even if we didn't vote for them, even if we didn't like them. This is what we do: we pray for them, and we don't just pray that they will do what we want them to do. We pray for them, we pray wisdom on them, we pray because we believe that God can turn and direct the hearts of men. So we pray for these people. That's our attitude.*

God's desire for all to be saved

We're also reminded about God's attitude. *God's attitude is that all people would come to faith in Him, that all people would be saved. Saved from what? Saved from what? That's a question that's often asked of me. Well, we're not going to be saved from physical death. It's already too late for that. But we can be saved from the second death, that is, the spiritual death. And that's what Paul is referring to here.*

When he says that he's not a liar, what he's doing is he's contrasting between the Gnostic preachers of that day who were very well known to lie. They were grandstanders. So they had to make stories bigger than they were. They were just kind of known for that. They claimed to know things and see things that they do not know and that they did not see. And so this is what Paul is trying to say here.

Leadership Instructions

Men and Anger

Alright, then we get into this place of further leadership instructions. In verse 8, he says, "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing." Well, right there he's calling out men who, in general, particularly young men but all men, can have a propensity, a tendency to anger. To anger and expressing that anger physically, whether it be through our voice getting louder. I call it the gorilla effect. Often when a wife and husband get into an argument, when the man feels outwitted or can't get his way, that he tends to go gorilla. He tends to yell or scream or get physical or demonstrate his beastly powers. To some extent, this is what Paul is talking about. It's unbecoming for spiritual men. It's unbecoming for leaders. It's simply unbecoming. So he doesn't want us to have a spirit of anger. Now, we're specifically talking about the church, this creation of God, but it'll leak out beyond that.

And then, Verse 9, he says, "I also once--" Now, when you go to the original language, you could easily put the word "likewise." In other words, he's asking the men to cooperate. He's asking the men to calm down. *He's asking the men to lead by example. Make no mistake, he's asking the men to lead by example, not by power, not by this power over, but more power to serve. Power with the right mindset, a collaborative power, an understanding power, a learning power, a patience power, not a now power. Now power is for emergencies.*

Women and Modesty

So he says, "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds appropriate for women who profess to worship God." So, is the Bible teaching that you can't wear makeup? Is the Bible teaching that you can't have nice clothes and jewelry? You know, apparently, what's going on here is we want to draw attention to ourselves, and this is what the Bible teaches against.

Power Tie

You know, when I was a banker, that's the first time I ever heard of and was coached in the term "power tie." Power tie. They actually taught me that if I was going to go into an important meeting that day, I needed to wear a dark suit and a red Power tie. It was a psychological advantage. It meant that I meant business. You know what it was, it was like paint to hide the insecurities. Paint to hide that this needs to be a win-win situation. It was a picture of dominance and power versus kindness and gentleness and reasonableness. And, you know, I look back at that, and I just think it's funny how so much of power is about manipulation. And that's kind of what we're talking about here.

Now, anybody with a reasonable mind knows that physically, a woman is going to lose a battle,

generally speaking, if she's in combat with a man, generally speaking. Now, there's girls that can probably beat up boys, [chuckles] and as I get older, I'm sure that, I could be a victim of that. So, this is kind of a way of leveling the playing field. *And what scriptures are teaching the ladies here is, like, that's not how you want to get men's attention. First of all, you don't want to become a sex object. You don't want to draw their eye for that purpose and for that reason. But draw them the way a man should draw them. Whatever attracts a woman to a man, there's short-term attraction and there's long-term attraction. Um, there's for who he is versus how he looks or what he owns. In the long term, you know, we are looking for good people in our lives. People that we can turn our backs to, people that we can live with, people that we can work together with side by side.*

And so, the emphasis here that Paul's clearly teaching is that, look, if you want to be a good leader, because, again, I believe this chapter is about the appropriate use of power or the proper use of power. And if we have to bring out the power ties, if we have to bring out these other things, there's this thing called Dress for Success, right? Or dress to impress. You know, I'm not against that, and I don't think the Bible is against that. But if that's all we've got, then we're going to lose.

And obviously, there's a lot of humanity going on here, right? Because, you know, when we read this letter, we're reading one side of a telephone conversation. That's really what's going on. This is Paul's response to feedback. This is Paul's response to a report that has been given about what's going on at this church. So we don't know the other side necessarily unless it's spelled out for us. But it certainly infers and implies that we've got a lot of power struggles going on, does it not, for him to say that.

Well, then he, then Paul, gets even stronger with instructions towards the women. He's going to ask the women, just like he asked the men, to back off of their power mode, their power over. Now he's going to ask the women to back off of their power to, right? Their power to, their power to frankly manipulate. Verse 11, it says, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission." Now, I know that doesn't go over well in the 21st century. It just doesn't go over well. I'll circle back to some of this in a little bit, but let me finish.

"A woman should learn in quietness and full submission," context is the church. "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man." I want to point something out here. "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man." *Again, in the original language, "teach" and "authority" are linked together, just like "Jesus Christ" is linked together. Jesus Christ is two words to describe one person. In this case, in the original language, it says "teach authority." If someone is teaching to have authority to or authority over. So Paul is not telling ladies that they can't teach. He's saying that you can't teach with the fundamental purpose of having power over.*

So, I'll finish the sentence. "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She must be silent." Ouch! Okay, but he essentially said the same thing to men earlier, but he is speaking to a different mode of their operation. He's saying, *"Dudes, you know when you fight, when you yell, when you get physical, when you raise your voice, you have lost your influence*

to lead. So, knock it off. Learn to be patient, learn to be kind, learn to listen, and maybe just say, 'Hey, I don't think I know it all yet.'" He's saying that's the kind of man that needs to lead. That's the gentle side of leadership that, according to Proverbs, is the most powerful kind of leadership. Proverbs says a gentle word can break a bone. A gentle word can break a bone.

Leadership is learned

Leadership is something that we have to learn. Leadership primarily comes from the idea of solving problems, serving someone, serving the community. Leadership has been perverted by sin to be something of dominance, and that's what's going on here. Men are dominating through their physical prowess, and women are dominating through their psychological tools that they have available to them in manipulation of men.

Exploring the Complementarian and Egalitarian perspectives

And then he goes on and gives some rationale. He says, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." And Adam, and you remember the biblical context, that when God saw that Adam was alone, he said, "That's not good." Right? It's not that God didn't already know that, but God is trying to teach us inductively where the man goes, "You know, gosh, I just don't feel whole. I just don't feel-- Something's missing. Something's missing here." And so, you know, it was God's collaborative way, if you will, to help the man realize, "Yeah, I need a partner. I need a partner." So, *this is where we come up with the term complementary. You know, men complement women, and women complement men. We're better together. That, you know, is basically the idea of creation. And together, we are made in the image and likeness of God. Together, man and woman.* If you go back to the Genesis account, it'll say that God made man in His own image and in His own likeness. He made them male and female.

So unfortunately, ever since the fall in the garden, we have been after each other. We have been against each other. We reject the role that God has for us. He tells men to be servants, but we're not very good at that. We like to be kings. We like to have swords and kill. Uh, we like to conquer. We like to be in charge. That's why we call it "King of the Hill," the power ties. We want our women to do what we want them to do when we want them to do it. We just really struggle, generally speaking. Not all men. Some men, you know, have a countenance that they've been blessed with, that they're just more cooperative. And then women have been competing ever since then. They've been competing for a voice, competing for a place. We see that in society, and apparently, it raised its ugly head here in the church. We have role confusion, we are discontent, we don't know what to do with power.

What I tell a lot of women who are married, speaking from a man who's been married for 43 years, I don't think women really understand the power that they have in their marriage. They do not understand the power that they have to raise up a knight, a knight in shining armor, a warrior. You know, because in some ways, your husband is a boy. In some ways, I'm still a little

boy. I wanna be a hero, right? I want to be respected and honored. And the woman, in the same way, but in a different way, wants to be honored and respected and cherished by her husband and treated kindly and gently by her husband. This has all been corrupted because of the fall. And so, you know, Paul's seeing it now alive in the church, and he's going, "Holy crimony! You know, we're supposed to be changing. We're supposed to be getting back to the Garden. We're supposed to be getting back to understanding this."

So he goes on and explains this event, "And Adam was not, uh, the one deceived." He was the one manipulated, maybe. "He was not the one deceived. It was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety." So here again, he throws out the uniqueness of women that men can't do. There's the uniqueness of a man, which again comes in his physical strength and the desire to provide for his family, desire to hunt and kill, desire to bring home treasures, the desire to build something. And these aren't sexist remarks, these are common sense remarks.

Does this have anything to say about men and women in the marketplace? Certainly does not. If you turn to your Bible in Proverbs chapter 31, almost half of that chapter is dedicated to praising industrious women, females that get out there and get it done, that make money in the marketplace, that buy and sell and trade land.

So, then, you know, we come to these questions. "Well, wait a second, are you saying then, Jim, that in the church women should sit down, shut up, and be quiet? Is that what you're saying? Are you saying that they can't wear makeup and jewelry and nice clothes? Is that what you're saying?" Well, first of all, let's make this really clear: Jim's not saying anything. What's being said here is from God's word. Now, what we can do is ask some questions.

We know since the beginning of time, in the fallen globe in which we live, men have dominated men, and we sometimes make that worse than it is. And I know, there's a lot going on today about the sin of slavery, and there certainly is a sin of slavery, but there's also slavery that's not a sin, and it takes a little bit of history lessons to go back and realize that many of it was economic pragmatics for everyone involved. But in the negative, dark terms that we think of as slavery—being locked up, being malnourished, being whipped, being owned—all of those kinds of things, that certainly has that negative connotation. But we also know that men have dominated women for centuries, and some would say still to this day, and that's certainly true in certain cultures and becoming less and less true in other cultures.

The book of Galatians, when Paul writes to the church in Galatia, he makes it extremely clear that in the sense of equality, there is no male or female, there is no Jew, there is no Greek. There really isn't any ethnic diversity. There are no kings and no servants. There is none of that. From a heavenly perspective, in our essence, we are equal. However, in the realities in which we live, there are different realities, and one of those is cultural.

Historical and cultural factors influencing interpretations

So one of the questions that people ask me in the interpretation of this text is, "Well, isn't that more of a cultural reality, that the women needed to be this way because that's how the culture accepted it?" You know, yes and no, because Paul writes to the church of Corinth. So in other words, if the context is the church of Ephesus and then we say, "Was this just a letter written to Ephesus and the purpose of this letter was that it would only apply to that church?" You know, that's a stretch, guys. First Timothy has been included in the canon of Scripture, and in doing so, it is meant to benefit all of the church. And then the letter to the church in Corinth takes the same tone and even more stricter tone when it comes to this topic, and you can read that in the letters to the church of Corinth.

Is it true, though, that culture would have accepted these instructions better than our culture? Well, absolutely. But that doesn't mean that the church is something unique and something different. Something unique and something different. You also need to realize that in that culture, the pagan religions often were led by women, and if they weren't led by women, there were many women in leadership. So to say that it was a cultural norm for women to be subjected to men in all leagues and cases would also be inaccurate.

So I think for me, if we now say, "Alright, Jim, what are your leadership perspectives here?" Well, I bring some philosophy into this and also look at some biblical illustrations and the total counsel of God's word. Women are given spiritual gifts just as men are, and so that in itself expresses and implies that the image of God is animated through both men and women with all the spiritual gifts. Is there a case that could be made that a woman could be a pastor at a local church? Absolutely. But you know, one thing we need to realize is that the way we do church today and the way they did church then is radically different in a lot of ways. You know, we have organizational charts, we kind of operate things that we have learned from business and vice versa.

So when a woman teaches in the congregation of men and women, I don't have a problem with that. And I don't have a problem with that because I don't think the Bible has a problem with that. And I pointed that earlier. When authority and teaching are brought together to describe the same thing, which is the leader of something, why would God not—I don't want to say allow, but why would He set it up where the preference would be for a man? Well, in my opinion, it's common sense. It goes back to the physical—the power over versus the power to. Some of the most influential people I know are women. Some of the most influential people in my life have been women. That is power to, power to change, power to transform.

I don't think it's a sexist thing in the circles that I'm involved with in the church world but also in the marketplace, wise people are wise people, good leaders are good leaders. They're male and they're female, and they lead well. Whenever I see a woman who seems to be thirsty for position, I get weary. I get scared the same way I do when a man longs for the same thing. What's interesting is our next podcast will be talking about that. I'll be talking about that because the next chapter talks about those who desire to be leaders.

So, am I an egalitarian, meaning that I believe that there really are not any roles that are unique to men and are not allowed, if you will, for women and vice versa. Well, I mean, childbirth is for women and it's not for men, and some see that as a curse and others see that as a blessing. If a burglar enters your home at night, I don't think you take a vote about who's going to get out of bed and confront the evil. I don't think that's what happens. I think that in a typical, normal household, the father gets out of the bed. They hear the window break, the kids are in bed. They don't sit there and do rock-paper-scissors. They don't collaborate. They don't say, "Well, you know, I took on the last burglar, it's your turn to take on this burglar." No, I think it's just kind of common sense. This is how God made the man. He might live, he might die, but what he's going to do is he's going to physically confront evil that has entered the home. And we don't fight about that. We don't fight about that, do we?

Key Takeaways

So what I'm trying to say is, I think that this chapter is about the appropriate use of power, the understanding of roles. If any man struggles in respecting a woman, that is the man's problem. If the woman acts becomingly, that is the man's problem. But in the same way, if a man has lost the respect of followers, there's a reason behind that. Probably more importantly to me is I'm certainly a complementarian. *I believe that we are better together. I believe that men and women should serve in leadership together. I think if they don't, then they're blindsided. I think they have blind spots. I love it when a husband and wife serve together in ministry, whatever their role is. I believe that 100%*, and I would encourage you to really examine if this is a topic that really gets you bent out of shape. Then I think it's a topic that is really testing your leadership. And maybe *I would encourage you to realize that one definition of leadership is that it is a conversation, it is a dialogue, it is a process. So let's just continue to dialogue about some of these things that we learn about here in First Timothy.*

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