

# Women, Teaching and Deception

By Margaret Mowczko.

This article can be found on: <http://newlife.id.au/equality-and-gender-issues/women-teaching-and-deception/>

Primarily because of one Bible verse, [1 Timothy 2:12](#), many churches do not permit women to preach or teach in church services when there are men present.[1] [1 Timothy 2:12](#) has been interpreted and applied by these churches as effectively prohibiting all women from teaching any man for all time.

Many of these churches believe that Paul gave this prohibition because women are (supposedly) more susceptible to deception than men.[2] They base this view on [1 Timothy 2:13-14](#) where Paul says that “it was the woman who was deceived”. However, the Scriptures never actually state, or show, that women in general are more likely to be deceived than men.

Churches which do not allow women to preach[3] or teach in a church service[4] – where *many* people can hear and assess what is being taught, often allow women to teach young, impressionable children – where typically very *few* adults can hear and assess what is being taught. These same churches also often allow women to teach other women ([Titus 2:3-5](#)).[5]

If these churches truly believe that the reason why women should not teach men is because women are more easily deceived, logic would suggest that women should not be trusted to teach vulnerable children and other, supposedly gullible, women. Yet many women are trusted and even encouraged to teach children and other women, but remain barred from teaching grown men in church services. This simply doesn't make sense. Surely Paul was suggesting something other than the idea of “female deception” when he brought Adam and Eve into his first letter to Timothy in verses 13-14.

I do not think that the real reason Paul restricted a woman from teaching *and* domineering a man in the Ephesian church[6] was because women are more easily deceived than men, or because of Eve's deception in particular. As I have stated in my series of articles on [1 Timothy 2:12](#), I believe that Paul mentioned Adam and Eve to correct a false teaching that was circulating in the Ephesian church which claimed that Eve was created first and Adam was the one deceived. There are several Gnostic texts which state this false, topsy-turvy thinking. (Early church fathers, Irenaeus and Tertullian, quoted from 1 Timothy and identified the heresy in Ephesus as a form of Gnosticism.) Furthermore, in [1 Timothy 2:12](#), the word “to teach” is tied to the word *authentain* which might mean “to domineer” but could refer to something more sinister. This is a very important consideration. Paul was not writing about sound teaching in his prohibition. Moreover, Paul's instructions were written in response to a particular problem in a particular congregation. [All of these factors are discussed in my articles on [1 Timothy 2:12 here](#).]

If Paul's prohibition was meant to be universal and timeless then the implication is that no woman, ever, has anything of spiritual significance to teach any man. I am dismayed that some Christians actually think this way and are perpetuating the dogma that women are not permitted to teach in church services when there are men present.[7] I do not believe that Paul's prohibition in [1 Timothy 2:12](#) was universal and timeless. I do not believe that Paul's intent was to institute a dogma which restricts capable Christian women from teaching in any setting or situation.

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## Endnotes

[1] It is unwise for churches to make strong doctrinal statements based on just one or two Scripture verses.

[2] In the Genesis account, Eve thinks about the serpent's advice before being ultimately deceived; whereas Adam appears to take the fruit without hesitation or thought ([Genesis 3:1-6](#)). Surely, being impulsive and thoughtless are undesirable traits in church leaders. Yet men are not stereotyped with these qualities to the same degree that women are associated with the trait of deception. Why is that?

[3] In the New Testament, "preaching" refers to the *public* proclamation of the Gospel message rather than the Biblical teaching and exposition that usually occurs in a church meeting.

[4] There is no reason to assume that the prohibition in [1 Timothy 2:12](#) is referring to a church service setting. Much of the behaviour that Paul addresses *throughout* 1 Timothy is not limited to church service settings, but refers to everyday Christian behaviours of the church community.

[5] [Titus 2:3-5](#) is used by some Christians to affirm that women can teach other women; however this verse is not about doctrinal or biblical teaching. [More on [Titus 2:3-5 here](#).]

[6] Paul wrote 1 Timothy when Timothy was caring for the church at Ephesus. One of the main reasons Paul wrote this letter was to give Timothy advice about how to deal with the problem of an early form of Gnostic false teaching ([1 Tim 1:3-4](#), [6:20-21](#)).

[7] A further implication of this faulty dogma is that the most ill informed, spiritually immature man has more right to teach in church services than the most well informed, godly women

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## Further Reading

This post by Laura Ziesel is excellent: <http://www.lauraziesel.com/2011/10/deceived-shall-teach-our-children.html>