



Text: 1 Timothy 2:8-15<sup>1</sup>  
Series: Living the Gospel  
Title: Part 6 – Living the Gospel as Men & Women  
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Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

A recent article in *The New York Times* gave major attention to an issue facing many schools throughout North America and the title of the article was this: “Can a Boy Wear a Skirt to School?” (Nov 8, 2009) The sub-title of the article announced: “When gender bends the dress code, high schools struggle to respond.”

In the article an American psychologist, Diane Ehrensaft, was quoted as saying: “This generation is really challenging the gender norms we grew up with ... A lot of youths say they won’t be bound by boys having to wear this or girls wearing that. For them,” and please take note this phrase, “**gender is a creative playing field.**” In other words, “gender” is something that can be redefined in whatever way a person wishes. Gender is open. Gender is interchangeable.

But is it? Is gender something we choose or are there objective gender differences? Susan Pinker is a developmental psychologist. She recently published a book entitled, “The Sexual Paradox: Extreme Men, Gifted Women and the Real Gender Gap.” According to Sarah Hampson who reviewed the book and interviewed Pinker for the *The Globe & Mail*, Pinker’s book “sets out a carefully researched scientific discussion of how the brains of men and women are differently hardwired and influenced by their soup of hormones. The conclusion? **Most men are hardwired to compete for supremacy in the workplace. Women are not. Most want a balanced life of work, family, friends and community because their biology has evolved that way.**”<sup>2</sup>

One psychologist calls gender a “creative playing field.” Another psychologist says men and women are hardwired to be different. I mention this today to point out that the question of gender is one with which our society is in a state of conflict and confusion. What does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman? Are there objective differences between men and women? How do we define and decide the question?

We need to be aware that our society’s confusion can influence us, too. Have you ever heard a wonderstruck husband joyfully announce, “We’re pregnant!” Mark Galli, one of the editors of *Christianity Today*, wrote about his frustration

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission, All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> “Are you woman enough to exit the corner office?” *The Globe & Mail*, March 10, 2008



with this expression. At heart, he believes, it essentially blurs the differences between men and women. “Pregnant,” according to the dictionary, means “carrying developing offspring within the body.”

Galli wrote, “Men may be able to run the mile in less than four minutes and open stuck pickle jars with a twist of the wrist, but for all our physical prowess, we cannot carry new life within us and bring it into the world. To suggest that we do is a slap in the face of women. It is also,” he went on to say, “a slap in the face of our Creator, who made us male and female. We were not created with interchangeable parts or traits, nor is it our purpose to duplicate or replace one another.”<sup>3</sup> Galli then suggested that that is not a happy thought to many people today, because, as he put it, **“egalitarian culture resents differences.”**

We live in what is typically called an egalitarian culture. The word “egalitarian” refers to a culture in which **“people are, in principle, equal and should enjoy equal social, political, and economic rights and opportunities.”** There is an essential justice in that that I think we all would affirm.

But there is a tension we live with in our culture. While we affirm equality, we also live with difference. For example, in just a few days our Olympic athletes will be competing for medals that are gender specific. In many cases, if not all, their competitions are parallel but separate. Men and women both compete but they compete separately.

How do we give expression to the legitimate differences between men and women, on the one hand, and also to our common humanity, on the other? We affirm equality between men and women in some things but we also acknowledge difference in others and therein lies our struggle.

As Mark Galli points out, the reason that egalitarian culture resents differences is that many egalitarians wrongly believe that differences by their very nature generate inequality. But equality and difference were both built into us by our Creator. In Genesis we read ...

**“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27**

Maleness and femaleness are identities that God has built into us in creation. Those are our differences. But God has built an essential unity into us as well by virtue of the fact that both men and woman are created “in the image of God.” In God’s plan for creation there is unity and diversity and both are to be honoured.

I am about to read a portion of God’s Word which, quite frankly, many people resent. I say that because we are the product of an egalitarian culture that has

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<sup>3</sup> “We Are Not Pregnant,” *Christianity Today*, July 26, 2007



not taught us how to honour the God-given differences of our genders. This passage of God's Word is laced with two terms that are hot buttons in our world, the words "**men**" and "**women**." What you need to know is that these two terms are gender specific words that cannot be translated generically as "people." Frequently in the New Testament the word "man" is generic and refers to both men and women. But these terms refer specifically to men and women as God created them, male and female.

Before I read this passage I want to remind us that Paul's purpose in writing this letter to Timothy was...

**"so that ... you may know 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 Timothy 3:14-15**

When I introduced this passage to you some weeks ago, I told you at the time that Paul's letter was going to challenge us in some very personal ways and perhaps for you, this morning might be one of those challenging moments. When Paul speaks and instructs us, he is speaking in his role as an apostle of God and his word is God's Word on that matter. God is speaking through the Apostle Paul and he is calling men and women to live their lives to reflect His glory. This is God's house; this is the church of Jesus Christ and this is his truth for us today...

**<sup>8</sup> I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; <sup>9</sup> likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, <sup>10</sup> but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. <sup>11</sup> Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve; <sup>14</sup> and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. <sup>15</sup> Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (1 Timothy 2:8-15)**

The Apostle Paul is giving God's instruction to the men and women of Ephesus on three aspects of their life together in God's house. First, Paul deals with men and the way they pray in God's house. Second, he deals with women and the way they appear in God's house. And thirdly, he deals with women and the way they learn in God's house. And in this third issue, Paul brings men and women together and deals with how they are to relate to one another in the matter of learning God's Word.

**First** of all, God addresses the men. Paul tells us, that



***In God's House, men are to pray in holiness***

Paul wrote...

**“I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;” 1 Timothy 2:8**

For whatever reason, and I don't intend provide scientific evidence to support my claim, it seems that women are more public about their spiritual lives than men. Some years ago I talked with a young woman who told me that in her experience of church life, it was the women who had kept her church alive. The men were no where to be found. Sadly, that does happen and it happens all too often. The general impression of church life in many places around the world is that men often default spiritual engagement to women. The old hymn, “Take My Life & Let It Be” has been parodied over the years to sing, “Take my wife and let me be....” There usually is some truth in sarcasm and in this case I believe that there is.

I applaud those women who've picked up the fallen reins over the years and have kept faith alive in struggling churches and families. For some of you, the godly example that played a role in bringing you to the Lord was a significant woman in your life, a mother, an aunt or another godly woman. But just because some women have had to pick up the reins dropped by some men does not mean that that's the way God wants it in his house! You might say, “Well, in our house, my wife looks after the spiritual matters in our home.” That might be the way it works in your house, but that's not the way God wants things to run in His House!

What God wants in his house is for men to pray! Now please understand that Paul is not suggesting that women are not to pray. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul affirms women who prayed in the public worship service of the church in Corinth. (1 Cor 11:5) But I think Paul is addressing men who in many ways are similar to men of our own day ... men who were tempted to be spiritually passive.

I'm so grateful that we have men in this church who model spiritual engagement in prayer. It's a beautiful thing to see men praying for one another after a service. It's a grace-filled moment to see men coming for prayer. I call it a “grace-filled moment” because I think Paul's direction here runs counter to the flow of life for many men. We tend to want to appear in control; prayer brings us to our knees. We want to appear able to handle whatever life throws at us; prayer is a public declaration that we need help, that we can't do it on our own. We sometimes believe the lie that real men don't cry; but tears are a frequent accompaniment to prayer, and so we avoid it. Prayer makes us vulnerable; we don't do “vulnerable.” But God wants us to pray!



And it isn't that God simply wants men to stand up and run through religious exercises and roll off religious prayers. God wants men to pray "lifting up holy hands without anger or quarrelling." Standing with hands lifted up is one of the many prayer postures in the Bible. Sometimes prayer is offered sitting (2 Sam 7:18), sometimes it is offered bowing or kneeling (Eph 3:14) and sometimes it is offered lying face down on the ground (Dan 9:18). The posture often expresses the intensity of our engagement. When we cry out to God in prayer for some of us our heads go down and for others they go back; for some, our hands go up while others grip the pew in front of them. The physical posture isn't the important issue; what's important is our whole-hearted engagement with God.

"Holy hands" is an expression that points to the quality of our lives and you find it throughout the Bible. The Book of Psalms asks the question: Who can enter God's presence? Who can approach God in prayer? The answer...

**"He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully." Psalm 24:5**

Rebellion and sin in our lives hinders our prayers. Paul points to anger and quarrelling as a hindrance to the prayers of men. Fights and contests are an issue that men seem to face regularly and we need to deal with the damage caused by those battles in a godly way if we want our prayer to be heard. Jesus said...

**"I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; ... So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:22-24**

And above all, men, make sure that things are right between you and your wife. Peter tells husbands to ...

**"live with your wives in an understanding way ... so that your prayers may not be hindered." 1 Peter 3:7**

Many years ago I served as a youth pastor. I had occasional opportunities to preach and on one of those Sundays, as I sat on the platform facing out to the congregation, my mind was drawn to something that had happened the previous Saturday night. I had had words with the mother of one of the teens in the youth group about her daughter. As I sat on the platform I noticed the mother of the girl sitting just a few rows back from the pulpit and my words from the night before suddenly came back to me in a rush. They had been intemperate and unkind, even if they might have been true. I knew I had wronged her and this Scripture came to mind. I knew what I had to do. I stepped down from the platform and slid into the pew beside her. I expressed my sorrow for what I had said to her



and asked her for her forgiveness. She was gracious and forgave me. I returned to the platform in time to share my message, my “gift at the altar” so to speak.

Men, we need to handle our disputes in a godly manner and we need to seek reconciliation so that our prayer will be heard by God. Paul’s instruction was given to a church where doctrinal disputes were becoming a serious problem. Whenever there are strong differences about doctrine, there are quarrels and there is anger. What strikes me about Paul’s instruction here is that although he cared very much for correct doctrine, his first instruction to the church wasn’t for them to engage in more Bible study, but to engage in prayer!

A couple of weeks ago we were looking at Paul’s word on waging the good warfare in chapter 1, verse 18. In the course of the message I shared a story about my grandfather’s wartime experience. After the service, one of our men told me of one of the most enduring memories he had of his grandfather. Late one night, as he was making his way through the house in the dark, he literally stumbled over his grandfather in the dark. What was his grandfather doing? He was kneeling in prayer! He said to me, “My grandfather didn’t go to war, but he was warrior!” Brothers, we need men to be prayer warriors for their families, for their church, for their communities, for our world! That’s how God wants men to behave in His House!

**Secondly**, Paul tells us that...

***In God’s House, women are to adorn themselves with godliness***

Paul writes...

**“I desire then ... that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.” 1 Timothy 2:8-10**

Paul isn’t condemning adornment for women. How can he when the Bible tells us that the church of Jesus Christ is seen by God as “a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev 21:2) In fact, the main focus of this statement is “that women should adorn themselves....” What he’s saying is that women should adorn themselves according to God’s standard of beauty, not the world’s standard.

Scholars point to examples in the culture of Paul’s day of extreme hair styles that took immense amounts of time to prepare. Many of these hair styles had gold and jewels woven into the design. And clothing in Paul’s day was a simple matter for most people but the fabrics that were available in the markets could also make dresses expensive. Ephesus was a prosperous trading city and the best fashions of the Roman Empire could be seen in its streets.



Please understand that Paul isn't condemning gold and pearls, good fabric and well-tailored clothing. One Bible scholar wrote:

*The reason for Paul's prohibition of elaborate hair styles, ornate jewelry, and extremely expensive clothing becomes clear when one reads in the contemporary literature of the inordinate time, expense, and effort that elaborately braided hair and jewels demanded, not just as ostentatious display, but also as the mode of dress of courtesans and harlots.<sup>4</sup>*

In other words, Paul was condemning adornment that sent out a message of materialism and sensuality. The words "respectable," "modesty," and "self-control" address both the issue of expense and the issue of sensuality. According to Paul, Christian women are to demonstrate thoughtfulness in the way they present themselves so that they avoid both an ungodly show of wealth as well as an ungodly sensual enticement. I have to say that in my experience, the women of this congregation do just that. And I thank you.

Given the focus on fashion and sensuality in our culture, Christian women face a constant barrage of messages telling them to ignore God's standards. Some of you might be tempted to say: "This is the way I choose to dress. It's appropriate to me and no one has the right to criticize me for it. I like it." But let me remind you: this is God's House! He wants adornment to be modest, respectable and consistent with your testimony to faith in Jesus Christ.

There have been only one or two instances over the years that I've been here at this church where women have been challenged about their dress and usually the issue has been inappropriate sensuality rather than expense. I'm grateful to those mature, godly women who have taken the lead in addressing the issue with their sisters who have stepped over God's line. I know it's difficult to do that.

Before I entered pastoral ministry Ruth and I served in a church as youth sponsors. One of the young women in our youth group consistently dressed in a sensual manner and Ruth had to speak to her about it. It was awkward. It was not well received. But it was the right thing to do. That young woman's inappropriate dress was affecting the atmosphere of the group as a whole. The situation had to be addressed because God has said, "In my house, women will adorn themselves with godliness."

Paul isn't content to just lay down a rule about outward style. He wants to get to the heart of the matter. He speaks about the appropriate adornment of "good works" as being more important than fabric and hair styles. The good works he has in mind are things like bringing up children to know and love the Lord, showing hospitality to strangers, giving compassionate care to those in need,

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<sup>4</sup>George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 135.



making sure elderly parents are taken care of, living lives of integrity in speech and action at home and in public, mentoring younger women in the knowledge and love of the Lord. (1 Timothy 5:10, 16; Titus 2:3-5) These are the beautiful things that adorn the lives of a Christian woman.

The most important thing to God isn't that you dress modestly or demurely but that you dress with godliness. The reality is that if your heart is dressed correctly, the outside will show it. What Paul says here is consistent with what Peter advises for women who live in God's house. Peter wrote...

**“Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.” 1 Peter 3:3-4**

Philip Yancey was touring a **leprosy clinic in Nepal** with his wife Janet when he met a woman whose deformity was startling. Her leprosy had eaten away the centre of her face so severely that he could see into her sinus cavity. She was, at first impression, Yancey wrote, **“one of the ugliest human beings I have ever seen.”** She scuttled along the ground like a wounded animal on all fours and as she approached Philip and his wife, Yancey prepared to be solicited for money, assuming she was a beggar. But his wife's reaction, as he tells the story, was “more holy.” She bent down and put her arm around the woman. The old woman rested her head on Janet's shoulder and began to sing in her native Nepali a recognizable tune: “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

A staff member of the hospital told Yancey that the woman was **one of the most devoted church members at the clinic**, most of whose patients were Hindus. “Dahnmaya comes every time the [chapel] door opens,” the staffer said, “She's a **prayer warrior**. She loves to greet and welcome every visitor who comes to the clinic.”

A few months later, Dahnmaya died. Yancey keeps a photo he took of Janet and Dahnmaya on his desk. He pulls it out occasionally when he wants to remind himself **of what true beauty really is**. He wrote:

*I see two beautiful women: my wife, smiling sweetly, wearing a brightly colored Nepali outfit she had bought the day before, holding in her arms an old crone who would flunk any beauty test ever devised except the one that matters most. Out of that deformed, hollow shell of a body, **the light of God's presence shines out. The Holy Spirit found a home.**<sup>5</sup>*

That's the adornment God wants women to wear in His House.

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<sup>5</sup> Philip Yancey, *Prayer*, p. 273-274



Finally, Paul tells us that...

***In God's House, women are to learn in quietness***

Paul wrote...

**“Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.” 1 Timothy 2:11-12**

Over the years the focus on these two verses has fallen on Paul's prohibition in verse 12 rather than on his command in verse 11 but this morning I want us to keep our focus on what Paul commands. I'll address the limitation he places on the teaching role of women two weeks from today but today we're focused on women learning.

Before we look at Paul's command to learn, just a word about “quietness.” Paul emphasizes the fact that women are to learn “**quietly**” (v.11) and to “**remain quiet.**” (v.12) Please understand that he doesn't mean “silently” or “in silence” as some translations unfortunately choose to translate the word. The word “quiet” that is used here is the same word Paul used back in verse 2 to describe the ideal Christian life as...

**“a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” 1 Timothy 2:2**

Quietness is not silence. It is a life marked by dignity, grace and contentment. It is not a spirit in turmoil. In a moment I'll tell what I think Paul is addressing by his emphasis on quietness, but for now just understand that he is not saying that women are to be silent.<sup>6</sup>

The only command in verses 8 to 15 is the one found in verse 11 where Paul commands that women are to learn. What are they to learn? They are to learn the Gospel. They are to learn the Word of God. They are to learn sound doctrine. They are to become fully educated women of God. Why?

Some people say that the only reason that Paul would command that women are to learn was so that they might become teachers and to some extent they are correct. Paul taught that older women are to mentor younger women about how to live in God's house. He wrote to Titus...

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<sup>6</sup>John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:735.



**“Older women ... are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.” Titus 2:3-5**

Women are to teach their children the truths of God’s Word and if you don’t think that that is an important task, just remember that Timothy, the recipient of this letter, was taught God’s Word by his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois (2 Timothy 1:5). Paul commends the impact of their teaching in Timothy’s life when he encourages him to...

**“continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom [the word is plural] you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 3:14-15**

And women also shared what they knew of God’s Word with men. There is an incident connected with Timothy’s church in Ephesus that demonstrates this fact. Some years before Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, a brilliant preacher by the name of Apollos showed up in Ephesus. (Acts 18:24-28) He was “an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures” and he taught accurately about Jesus, up to a point. Luke tells us that his teaching was limited by the fact that “he knew only the baptism of John.” But the Ephesian church had some very well taught men and women, two of whom were the husband and wife team of Priscilla and Aquila. Luke tells us...

**“when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” Acts 18:26**

Yes, women needed to learn in order to teach but that isn’t the main reason that they were to learn God’s Word. To suggest that the primary reason that Paul would command that women learn God’s Word was so that they could become teachers in the church is like suggesting that the primary reason I should study the Bible is so that I can prepare sermons for Sunday morning.

Believe me when I tell you that that is one of the greatest of dangers that any preacher or teacher of the Word of God faces! If my primary reason for learning God’s Word is to teach it to others, then I am guilty of the grossest form of hypocrisy! Just FYI: in my personal Bible reading these days I’m studying the letter of First Peter and I’m reading a book entitled, *Living the Cross Centered Life*. I’m telling you that this morning because I want to emphasize the point that there is a much grander reason for learning God’s Word than simply in order to become a teacher of it ... and here it is.

Moses decreed that God’s Word was to be taught to all the people of Israel, men and women alike. Why? This is what he commanded...



**“Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.”  
Deuteronomy 31:12-13**

The primary reason we learn God's Word is so that we can know him and live for him. Remember, Paul wrote this letter to Timothy so that the believers in Ephesus would know...

**“how one ought to behave in the household of God” 1 Timothy 3:14**

And sadly, there was a behaviour problem with some of the women in the Ephesian church. Paul wrote to Timothy about his concern that some of the younger widows in the church were learning things they ought not to learn. With too much time on their hands, he said,...

**“they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.” 1 Timothy 5:13**

Here is where Paul's emphasis on women learning God's Word in “quietness” touches the life of the Ephesian church. Instead of learning how to be idle gossips, these women needed to learn how to behave in God's household. These idle gossips were going from house to house causing turmoil and what they needed to learn was the quietness of spirit that comes from an understanding of the truth of God's Word. They needed to learn about the gentleness of Jesus. They needed to learn about the fruit of the Spirit. They needed to learn about the joy of the Lord. They needed to learn God's Word.

That's the kind of life that instructed, godly women are to lead in God's house. And men, as well as women, need to learn God's Word because in it we find the lessons of peace and gentleness that we need so that we can live a life that please the Lord.

As I think about this church, I have to say that in my experience that you, the women of this church, have an understanding of God's Word that is producing in you the qualities of quietness and godliness that God desires in the lives of people who live in His House. I'm not saying that to flatter you but to encourage you and to challenge you to continue to engage in the study of God's Word so that your lives, so that your families and so that this church will experience the blessing that comes from women whose lives radiate a quietness and dignity that reflects the gentleness of Jesus and the fruit of the Spirit.



As I close, let me bring what we've thought about this morning home for us.

- **Brothers, pray in holiness! Let me challenge you to...**

- Deal with relationships that need to be made right so that God will hear your prayer. Above all, make things right between you and your wife! (1 Peter 3:7)
- Commit to praying for your family, for our church, for your co-workers who don't know Christ.
- Become a man of prayer to the glory of God and maybe some day, someone will stumble upon you at prayer and it will make a difference in their life forever!

- **Sisters, dress in godliness. Let me suggest to you that...**

- Maybe like Stacy & Clinton on the TV show "What Not to Wear" you need to go through your wardrobe or your jewellery box and ask "am I glorifying Christ when I wear this?"
- If you haven't got the most up to date fashion in your closet, rejoice in your ability to wear the godly garments that come from caring for those in need, or loving your family or mentoring another woman in the faith. After all, those are the garments that really count with God.

- **And sisters, learn in quietness. Let me encourage you...**

- Some of you are women of great maturity in God's Word. Let me ask you: with whom are you sharing that rich resource of truth? Is there a young woman who needs your wisdom?
- Sisters, let me ask you another question: Is your knowledge of God's Word producing a quiet spirit in you? Is God's Word displacing gossip from your life and replacing it with calmness and dignity?

**Comment re final song:**

What we've been talking about is men and women living life by God's design rather than our own wisdom. What I'm inviting you to do today is to surrender your life and how you live it to the authority of Jesus Christ, the One who died for you.

"I Surrender All" allows us to express that desire and I invite you to sing it as a prayer of surrender to Jesus Christ.

- **Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- **Final Song:** I Surrender All (#596)
- **Benediction**