

1 Timothy 2:1-15

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Date: 10 May 2026

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[0:00] Well, as I said earlier, if you're joining us, then our practice at Cornerstone is to work our way through books of the Bible. We're working our way through 1 Timothy. In the 10 years that Cornerstone has been around, we've worked in one way or another through 40 books of the Bible.

We are running out of ones in which to look, and so we're picking up, you know, I'm thinking, you know, Ezekiel still to be done, Leviticus, and so on. But here we are in 1 Timothy.

It's Paul's first sort of recorded letter to his son in the faith, Timothy, as he calls him. As a spiritual son, not his natural son. And you kind of see that just in terms of the providence of God and the goodness of God.

Maybe because he did not have natural sons, he sort of adopts Timothy. And what a beautiful and redeeming thing that maybe went a painful path for him, just a longing that was never fulfilled.

Yet God brought around in a different way, bringing to him this spiritual son in the Lord's. And he states his purpose for writing, as we said last week, in chapter 3, verses 14 and 15.

[1:10] We said, although I hope to come to you soon, I'm writing you these instructions so that if I'm delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

And so these are, in a sense, foundational elements for every church fellowship, every household of God that has ever existed. Last week, we saw how Paul centers that round the gospel, faithfully holding to the gospel, the historic, apostolic, biblical word of God, which brings spiritual life and health and vitality and prevents false teaching, which makes the church sick.

And had been doing that in Ephesus. It's centered around what he says is a trustworthy saying in chapter 1, verse 15, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, centering it around that beautiful and wonderful gospel truth with a central purpose of chapter 1, verse 4, advancing the work which is by the gospel of faith in comparison, probably, with the teaching that was being falsely taught in Ephesus by some folks.

So every household of God, every church should have gospel-centered teaching. But we're going to see today that in addition to that, we need gospel-centered praying and gospel-centered gatherings.

So verses 1 to 7, praying, 8 to 15, how we gather. Now I understand, and Ryan helpfully kind of prayed for us all, that some of you might feel apprehensive about this passage and what I might say, especially if you're new to all these things, thinking, what's all this about?

[3:06] So what I might say about verse 11 and onwards. Well, when we get there, I will treat it with the gentleness and respect. I hope that you suspect that I might, if that relieves any apprehensions.

But first of all, then gospel-centered praying. Verse 1, Paul says, In other words, Paul is saying, amongst your fellowships, amongst the people of God, prayer needs to be a priority.

We see that reflected in Acts, don't we? Where the church was growing in Acts. The apostles were saying, look, we need to give ourselves to the Word and to prayer. And so that Word, those are priorities.

Word, chapter 1 here, chapter 2. So we see what the early church in Acts 6 were focusing on. Paul is reiterating, make a priority of prayer.

I urge you, he says, first of all, first of all, pray. And of course, I mean, that's a sermon in itself, just those words, the privilege that is ours that we can speak to God.

[4:19] That he is invited, he calls on us, come, ask, seek, cast your burdens on me, for I care for you, and so on. So many encouragements to come. The book of Psalms, just full of aids and helps in how to pray in all circumstances.

Other helpful prayers, as we're looking at in Pray Big in our community groups. Pray. Enjoy the privilege that is ours as the children of the living God, that when we pray, he hears and answers in accord with his good, pleasing, and perfect will, that he delights for us to come to him.

So come pray and enjoy the gift that is prayer of being able to speak with the one who loves us more than we know or could imagine. But he says, when you pray and use that gift, pray for all people.

You might think, all people, everyone, that's a long prayer list that we're going to pray for the, you know, however many billion people there are in the world currently. Well, I think in context, it's fair to infer that he meant all kinds of people, especially when you give the context of chapter one, where people were kind of using the law and genealogies to kind of maybe separate out and say, oh, these people are particularly special because of their genealogy and so on.

Paul's like, no, no, that's not how it works. It is the gospel. Help is much better than that. Any tribe, any nation, any tongue, any class, any background, any skin color, any area of town, any education, the gospel is for all kinds of people.

[6:00] And wonderfully, I think we see a glimpse of that reflected in our fellowship when we gather on Sunday morning, that we have folks from continental Africa. We have folks from Africa.

We have folks from continental South America and North America. We have folks from continental, you know, all around God's globe, people are being saved. All kinds of people.

And God is, well, you know, on that last day, we will be gathered together. The gospel is for all kinds of people. And so we need to pray for all kinds of people, not just the ones that we might prefer.

However, the gospel liberates us from prejudice and bigotries into the freedom that Christ would have us have.

And so, as we sort of reflect on that, remember, actually, the context where Paul is saying, you know, this is how you conduct yourselves in your public gatherings together.

[6:59] So our public prayer should reflect these things. And so he gives for pointers, for words, petitions, for, you know, asking for needs.

But as we've been learning through the week and through last week in community group, praying, you know, it's kind of spiritual hub needs, I think was the phrase that Alistair Begg used.

Lord, open eyes to the wonder of the gospel, the depth of your love and so on. Just bringing sort of full gospel beauties and realities into our prayer for people.

And of course, we pray for exams and for our children or whoever's sitting in them, we give a good account of themselves. But more than that, we add to it, Lord, draw them closer to yourself.

Help them to enjoy you more, know you more, love you more, know the degree to which they are loved and so on. So there are petitions, there are prayers.

[7:58] It kind of, I think it's a general word for prayer. The Greek literally is toward to pray. It's a sort of general devotion that stems from a precious relationship with the Lord.

It's interesting that the Greek word for worship means also is to come near, as the Greek word for prayer is to come near. In worship, it's actually to come near to kiss.

Kiss the hand of a sovereign, or kiss the cheek in a sense, in our worship of the sovereign of heaven. But draw near, come towards, to pray, offer devotion and praise and adoration.

But also intercession is that standing in the breach for someone maybe who finds that they cannot pray for themselves. And as we do that, we join with a glorious company, which includes the Lord Jesus himself, who in Romans 8, 34, we're told is at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. And the Spirit himself also, Romans 8, verse 26, interceding for us with groans and so on. That we join in that company as we intercede, as we pray for others and into other situations where people may struggle to pray for themselves.

[9:09] And it is wonderful that there are those amongst us who are burdened to intercede, maybe in particular for our parliaments and parliamentarians, for our city and for our nation, bringing prayers of intercession for these things, lifting our country and our city and these decisions that are being made to the Lord.

And thanksgiving. And it's a good reminder, isn't it? Because so often when we pray, we can forget thanksgiving, forget to say thank you. But when we do, it changes our perspective and the atmosphere of our heart, doesn't it?

As we come with thanksgiving, as we remember just all the ways in which God has maybe already answered prayer or all the goodnesses that we're experiencing because of the gospel. I remember being in a prayer time where folks were praying for this and for that and then someone just prayed a whole prayer of thanksgiving.

And it kind of just changed and lifted the tone as you think, oh yeah, there are lots of things to be thanking God for as well as all the other things that we need to be praying for.

The psalmist examples that, doesn't he? In Psalm 103, where he's sort of preaching to his own soul, probably in a time of despair. And what does he say?

[10:32] He says, bless the Lord, oh my soul. He's preaching to himself and forget not all his benefits. And he lists all the ways in which the Lord has blessed him. Don't forget to have thanksgiving in the midst of our prayers.

And of course, big pray big. It's really helpful in terms of, I think, Alistair Begg talks about the acronym ACTS to kind of help us in our prayers. I personally prefer, prefer, wow, sticky toffee pudding as an aid, but that's another sermon in itself.

Then it's interesting, isn't it, that who he goes on, not only this is the sort of prayers to put in, things to put into your prayer, but actually who to pray for, for kings and those in authority. And I wonder if he especially mentions those because they're not the kind of people that we would naturally put in our, on our prayer lists, praying for King Charles and Queen Camilla or whomever.

You can imagine that as this letter was being read out in Ephesus, some folks getting, if you pardon the Scottish phraseology, the books, the thought of having to pray for Nero.

I mean, he was as mad as a hatter. But Paul's saying, no, no, when you're praying, you need to pray for him. To pray for our sovereign and our parliamentarians as Rowan did for us today.

[11:56] Praying for parliamentarians, those who are believers and their witness and their ability to speak gospel truths in the public square. And that Romans 13 reminds us, doesn't it, even if they don't respect the office bearer, we are called to respect the office which they hold as one who is an authority over us.

So here, Paul says, pray for them. See that the scope and the breadth of our prayers, yes, you know, in private, but also in public because our God is the sovereign of heaven.

He's the God of the whole world. And so there should be a breadth, a worldwide breadth in our prayers, shouldn't there? And actually, in our public prayers, I think there's something special.

I remember being a young Christian going up to university and sitting in church and learning how to pray from Victor, who was the pastor of the church that I went to.

He was the only one who prayed in the church. But actually, it's beautiful, isn't it, that different people come and pray on this platform with different temperaments, different ways of expressing things and sort of helping us to kind of think through how do we pray, listening to some of the ways in which they, the different ways in which they pray.

[13:22] So why are we praying for our governing bodies? Well, Paul goes on to outline that, that believers may live peaceful and quiet lives and all godliness and holiness. And you might just think, you know, you can imagine why those in a persecuted context might want to pray that, but also it sounds like, so is Paul just praying that so we can have nice little kind of middle-class lives and nobody really bothers us?

Well, that's not what he's saying here. And I wonder if, you know, if we might sort of think, well, what are we praying for if we're praying for that?

Are we praying for freedom of conscience or speech or religion in our country? Maybe. The thing is, with those, those can be a bit of a Faustian pact for us as believers because they're not the ultimate good because there are some things that would come in those freedoms that just, we would think were actually binding folks, not setting them free.

But in praying for those, for our country, that we might be able to live quiet lives and so on, basically, he's praying that we might be able to freely share the gospel.

That is fundamentally, I think, what he's saying when it boils down to it. And verse 3 gives us more, doesn't it? This is, as we do that, as we're praying for our country and the opportunity to freely declare the gospel, then this is good.

[14:45] It pleases God. Why? Because he wants all kinds of people to be saved and come to a saving knowledge of the truth because that ties in with his will and purpose that we might share.

We may come alongside him in his purpose to save and be able to do that with freedom. So, just again, in line with sort of central purpose that Paul's outlining for every local church that we might be able to, chapter 1, verse 4, advance God's work.

And what is that? Well, it's making disciples, isn't it? Bringing folks into discipleship and helping them to go on in their discipleship. It's mission and maturity. Like, as we stated in our vision statement, it's our work and our witness.

Living and sharing the word, the gospel. Praying to that end. Praying for peace, verses 1 to 2, so that we may preach the gospel, verses 3 to 7.

Hence, verse 5. We need this because, or for, verse 5, there is one God, one mediator between God and mankind, the man Jesus, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people, all attested in accord with God's timing.

[16:01] He's reminding us there is only one way, one God, one mediator between God and man, the God, man, Jesus Christ, who paid the ransom price for sins.

People need to hear that in order to be saved, in order to come to that saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, to release them from the chains of sin and death into new life and eternal life.

And of course, that is going to be harder to hear, not impossible, but harder to hear if there's no liberty to proclaim it. Keep praying for gospel liberty.

And Paul says, of this gospel, which people need to hear, that we need to pray for our government, our parliamentarians, so that we have liberty to do that. Of this gospel, I was appointed a herald and an apostle.

And as he just sort of reminds them of that, and in a sense, you kind of wonder if he's like, yeah, I know, it's unbelievable, isn't it? You think who I was. I've been appointed a herald and an apostle of this.

[17:05] I'm not telling the lying, I'm telling the truth. Maybe some of those law teachers were, those false teachers were questioning it, saying, Paul, what does he know? And Paul's saying, no, no, I've been appointed, the Lord has intervened in my life.

That's the direction I was going and they totally turned it 180 degrees. And he's appointed me a true and faithful teacher to the Gentiles, basically all the kinds of people who do not come from the Jewish background, basically everybody else who do not come from a Jewish background like he did.

I've been appointed to them, to all kinds of people to take that gospel that you're praying for out to the rest of the world. So, there's gospel-centered prayer, there's a priority of prayer for all kinds of people, reflecting the gospel and gospel breadth, praying for those in authority over us.

But also, there's gospel-centered gatherings. And he addresses two specific issues with, you know, verse 8, first of all. He says, therefore, because of the priority of prayer, he's saying pray.

He's saying, and especially men, pray. You might think, well, why not women? Of course, women too, but probably because they are already praying. And he's saying to men, come on men, step up, pray.

[18:25] Pray on your own. Pray with your flatmates in your household. Pray with your family. Pray with your kids. Pray with your grandkids. Pray with your friends. Pray in the prayer times in the community group. Pray.

Come and pray in the corporate prayer meeting as we start that after the summer. Come, pray. As we make the priority of it, we need to actually do it. And it's interesting, he comes and says, and as you do that, lift up holy hands, by which he means holy living.

And in particular, it highlights two things. Don't come, you know, after just living a life where you're arguing and you're disputing with anger. It's possibly referring to the controversies that has been stoked by the false teaching.

But I'm sure he means wider as well. I wonder if he's addressing men in particular because, and that in particular, because men are more prone to that. Now, of course, anger is sometimes right, but often the way we use it is wrong, isn't it?

People use anger to try and control situations or people. It's used because that was the way that it was modeled in early life or because you've learned that, we've learned that as a kind of technique as we've grown up.

[19:41] Anger in the home, whether it's at a spouse or a child, anger in the workplace, it is massively destructive. And the scripture speaks into these, into anger in many ways.

Proverbs chapter 16 is just one, verse 32. He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

He who's slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. Rage, anger, are usually not the answer.

And then there's disputing. We can be the one who is disputing because, well, there are lots of reasons for it.

Because we're stubborn. Because we're prideful. Because we don't know just how to lose a conflict, never prepare to step down or to back off.

[20 : 43] We don't know to learn how to pick our battles. We're self-righteous and we're unforgiving. We do it because we're insecure and need to kind of prove ourselves in some way to kind of validate our sense of worth and so on.

We do it because we think it's macho and push our way around. We do it for power. We do it for money and great, whether that's in the home or in our workplace, whether we're negotiating for contracts, dealing with colleagues and so on.

Don't come to the prayer meeting with hands that are filled with anger and disputing. But rather, he says, come to the prayer gathering with a life being transformed by the gospel that is shining for the kingdom.

As you come with clean hands and a pure heart, as you come with holy hands, then the Lord doesn't have to work on our hearts, you know, convicting us that though the gospel is offensive, we don't have to be offensive as well.

Actually, we need to be very different so that though the folks might be offended by the gospel, they're not offended by us in the way that we present it. That actually, as we come and we realize these things, we appreciate and are learning that it is part of the new identity that we have in Christ.

[22 : 09] Who are we? Well, Peter outlines that, 1 Peter 2, verse 9, where he says this, but you, me, you, are a chosen people.

You're a royal priesthood. You're a holy nation. nation. God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Saying, come, learn to be who you are.

And then, again, addressing what looks to be a specific issue, in particular to those who were wealthy in Ephesus, and Ephesus was a wealthy place, but also making a sort of general point.

And as with that thing about lifting holy hands and praying, of course, that applies to men. It also applies to women. I think this, I mean, obviously not braided here with, you know, on such things necessarily, but the same thing applies to both men and women.

[23 : 24] The Bible Project folks work on the idea that the wealthy women were parading their status with all the symbols of wealth and position and outward adornment in a way that, you know, was very obvious in that time and that culture.

He's not saying and every time and every culture, you know, don't have braided hair or have gold earrings or whatever, but I think he's saying that you were particularly using it to mark yourselves out as very different from everyone else.

But actually, who are we? We're brothers and sisters. Yes, we come from all kinds of backgrounds, but we're not marking ourselves. We're trying to kind of unite together and not mark out the differences in such a way that it is unhelpful.

So when the culture is immodest or indecent and maybe in our past we shared those value, actually when we come to Christ, the gospel begins to reshape us, isn't it?

Not just the way that we think, not just the attitude of our heart, not just the way that we think about ourselves, but also the way that we dress. And that doesn't mean to say that you have to be dyed and wear white socks and sandals and a rainbow-strapped guitar singing around good by my amalords.

[24 : 44] That's not what's being said here. Of course, there's creativity and, you know, stop looking at what I'm wearing, okay? I'm not a trendy dresser, okay? I know what you're thinking.

But actually, you know, ways that reshape, you know, actually where we put our value and our identity, is fundamentally in what God thinks of us, not what others think of us and how we might reshape that.

Our lives are reshaped, redeemed by the gospel in every hour of our lives. And of course, that applies as much to men as it does to women. Outwardly adorned with good deeds, thinking about others, not simply thinking about ourselves.

So then, turning from gathering for prayer and meeting, thinking about how the word is handled in those meetings.

And here is a passage that could easily, we could easily let it divide us. that even though Cornerstone holds a traditional, if nuanced, position on this, you know, one of the things that I think is an encouragement and a joy is that we have not as yet let it divide us.

[26 : 13] And I'm so grateful to those who don't necessarily fully subscribe to Cornerstone's position on this for the grace that you show. Now, unless you're very new, you'll know that I mention this kind of stuff and sort of talk about how we parse out this passage with everyone who comes to Cornerstone who wants to join a community group or join the church just so that everyone, there's no, there's nothing hidden in coming to Cornerstone.

We try and be transparent in these things. And for some, as I meet with them, they're like, yep, that's fine, I'm happy with that, that's what I believe. And then for others, they're maybe honest enough to say, well, to be honest, I'd parse that out differently, but there's enough that I appreciate about Cornerstone not to see that as a significant issue that would stop me from coming.

And of course, we have a practice of training. We train both men and women for ministry roles.

Esther Dixon and Kat, who have come and been apprentices with us, now working with UCCF, Emily, who's apprenticed with us over these past two years, staying on staff here.

And we currently have more women than men on staff. And I know you know what I'm doing, I'm kind of slightly wiping my feet here before I enter in on this passage, just kind of, you know.

But as we look at it, what Paul, I think, is doing is drawing heavily on Genesis 1-3. And in Genesis 1-3, when we looked at it, when we went through that first section of the book of Genesis, we saw that when God created men and women, he created them equal.

[27 : 59] He created us both, men and women, in his image. And so, men and women, the Bible is absolutely, fundamentally clear, are equal in value before the Lord.

words. Also, I have to say, I did run all that I'm about to say by Rowan on Friday, because I value what she thinks. She's done a lot of thinking about this stuff, and I wanted her to have some input.

Well, Colin Smith, who came and preached with us, and we enjoyed his sort of passage on preaching on Hebrews, he helpfully points out that in the context, actually, this was radical.

You're like, huh? Really? Well, it is radical. Verse 11, when he says, a woman should learn. In a culture that viewed women as second class like property, this was radical.

This was redeeming that Genesis view back and saying, look, you know, you're equal, of equal value before God. Learn together. A woman should learn.

[29 : 08] The gospel raises women to that rightful position of equal value in the sight of God, able to learn, actually, in a way that was absolutely countercultural in the Roman world.

And we remember, of course, how the Lord Jesus reflected that women were the first witnesses at the resurrection in a time when a woman wasn't able to stand in court and give witness.

Jesus says, no, no, I want you to be the first witnesses. Raising, the gospel raises in that time and in every time the status of women and children and slaves and others who would be viewed differently as having equal value before God.

It's interesting, the historian, not the actor, Tom Holland, says that that understanding of the value, you know, the way that Christianity, the gospel, raised the value of women that was countercultural is probably one of the reasons in the providence of God that Christianity spread across the known world.

Because as women heard this, as others heard this, they're like, wow, that is good news. And drew their attention and say, I want to find out the one who secures that news for me in my life.

[30 : 26] But also, as we saw in Genesis 1-3, men and women are equal but are wonderfully different.

We are made to, and Rowan, I think, mentioned this in her prayer, to complement one another. And the root of that word is to complete one another. The one thing in the garden, remember, that was not good was for a man to be alone.

He was incomplete. He was incomplete. And the two, men and women together, reflect the image of God. So as in the Trinity, where there are three distinct persons, yet they are one, and have

distinct roles even within the Trinity, so too we who are made in his image are distinct persons. Two distinct persons, men and women, and called to be one in a marriage union and fulfill different roles within it, reflecting the Trinity itself.

And Paul kind of, a various passage in which he mentions that, 1 Corinthians 11, verse 3, Paul draws out that idea. He says, but I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of a woman is man, and the head of Christ is God, the Father.

[31 : 45] That even Christ willingly volunteers to submit himself to the authority of God, the Father, even though they're equal. And as they do that, what is going on in this fellowship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

Well, they're each saying to each other, you are amazing. May you be glorified. May you enjoy my love. May you enjoy my presence, my fellowship, my desire to see you exalted, and they're saying that to each other.

There's a mutual desire for mutual glory and exaltation. And I guess that should be reflected in, for example, a marriage between a man and woman, seeking each other's prospering.

So what about in quietness and full submission? Well, to who? First of all, of course, then to the Lord, principally, isn't it, and to his word and to his ordering of things, looking to, whether it's a husband or a church leadership, to seek their prospering in the Lord and in his gifting of them. And there's a crossover here in this kind of thinking, isn't there, with Ephesians 5, and where Paul talks about marriage. Well, so too, in the church, we together as men and women, as we are together the bride of Christ, we submit to the Lord, to work humbly and falteringly together to reflect those same principles in the Trinity themselves, and the way that that has worked out in the way that we were made, knowing that those things have been affected by the fall, but actually that Christ is helping us to redeem them in himself.

[33 : 48] And so we try and work these things out humbly in both the home and in the church. And Tim and Kathy Keller used to say, you know, you hear on television, it'd say, you know, now, don't try this at home.

Well, they would say, you know, when teaching on these things, only try this at home and in the church. Following C.S. Lewis, I think, right idea, that we can't expect the whole world can understand these things.

And so therefore, in the world, we need to advocate for equality to be restored in society, continuing to right the wrongs of the past, whether that's over equal pay and such like.

And if you want to sort of dig into more, we don't have time to go into this in full detail this morning, Kathy Keller has written a really helpful little book called Jesus, Justice, and Gender Rules, in which he outlines in a deeper way these principles.

And I just want to be clear because there's a couple of things. This does not mean submitting to some random Christian bloke, which some random Christian blokes in the past that I have met have advocated.

[35 : 07] And it doesn't mean that you can't submit to your female boss in the workplace. that's just ridiculous. But again, some folks have kind of thought that that's what this means.

I know it's obvious, but I just want it to be clear. Also to be clear that the ordering that Paul is advocating here in the church is not about power, it's not about value.

It's about seeking to kind of create a gospel environment where the gospel is clearly seen, where we're reflecting something of the very nature of God himself and the goodness of God and the redeeming purpose of God so that there is no unnecessary distraction or input from the culture, but we're able to be beautifully distinctive and say the God that we worship is wonderful and redeeming and has good purposes for us.

Let me say this. I know some great women Bible teachers. They're much better than me. I will not embarrass the ones that are in this room, but Esther Dixon is fabulous.

It's my joy to have known her since she was two years old and to have her come and work with us for two years and just see her go from strength to strength in her gifting and her ability as she worked, first of all, as a staff worker and now helps and leads the Christian Union movement in Scotland.

[36 : 46] And we are blessed, aren't we, by the ministries of women in this fellowship. So the principles of verse 12 are worked out in cornerstone in that we try and uphold these principles outlined here by Paul humbly, falteringly, in public worship, which is the context of this passage.

But you know that in community groups and seminars that we lead are in similar contexts like speaking at the Christian Union, Pioneer Mission, Amongst Kids, Youth, Students, and many more contexts, we're perfectly happy to encourage men and women to open up the Bible and lead and study.

But here's probably the nub. Paul roots his thinking not in culture of the time or even after the fall but in the timeless pattern of creation, reflecting something of the timeless pattern of God's and affirming equality and complementarity that were there before the fall but also notes the consequence of the fall.

You know elsewhere, Paul is really clear Adam is culpable for the fall of Romans 5.12 as reflecting on Genesis 3.23 and 24. And if that's it, what is he saying?

Why is he saying that? He's saying that, I think he's saying as he reflects on Genesis, sin has broken the pattern of creation pattern in the Trinity. The serpent, not the Lord, led the woman who led the man.

[38:27] And saying that sin just kind of puts the order of things all topsy-turvy. And the gospel seeks to remedy that.

And the reference to childbearing would be worrying if literal for what about those who aren't able to have children? So he's clearly not meaning it absolutely literally.

So what does he mean? Well, either because Paul is clearly drawing on that Genesis 1-3 passage. This verse is a reference to Genesis 3-15 and the seed that would come to save us all through childbearing, obviously, or through the generations.

Or it's sort of advocating a general working out of the role God has given to women. I think probably the first. And, you know, the Bible is clear when you look at it, he's not saying that women should not work.

You clearly have Lydia who's a business leader there in Philippi. A strong woman, you know, who puts Paul in his place. No, no, you're staying at my house and you're going to keep teaching and the acquiesces to her, which is beautiful.

[39:41] But in our context, he is saying be careful not to value those who are called to motherhood or to fatherhood. You know, if a mother decides to work, that's fine.

If she decides to stay at home and work full time at home as a mum, that is also equally good, whether it's for a short time or for the whole of her working life.

That we should celebrate these people staying at home as well as those who go to work. So the Bible outlines principles we humbly seek to work out amongst us as men and women in mutual submission to the Lord, which is an important caveat, seeking what?

Seeking the prospering of one another, taking on roles that I suspect most of us would not naturally desire or shy away from.

And yet in the Lord, committed to trying to work these things out with bucket fulls of love and grace and forgiveness, but also fun and the ongoing adventure that is following Christ, advancing the work, seeking the proper order in our local churches, gospel-centered prayer, gospel-centered gathering for his glory and our mutual good.

[41:07] So what's the trickle-down then for Cornerstone? Well, at the heart of this chapter, the heart of this book, the heart of the Bible is, of course, the gospel. One God, one mediator, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all people or all kinds of people.

The gospel is central, isn't it, to our meetings together. And that gospel calls us to two things that mark our life together, gospel-centered praying and gospel-centered gathering or living.

We are a people who pray, really pray with all kinds of prayers for all kinds of people, for our leaders, for the peace that allows the gospel to be advanced.

We are people who proclaim the truth about Jesus clearly and faithfully in the church and try and reflect that in the way that we order ourselves in the home as well as in the church in accord with God's good design.

And that one said that's a call to men to pray, isn't it? And to women. call to women to adorn themselves with good deeds, but also to men to do similarly.

[42:24] And all of us to gladly submit to Christ and to one another in the fear of God. This is not about restricting the church.

It's about releasing the church to shine. when we get the prayer right, we get the word right, when we get the order roughly right, our common life in the gospel, we create a community where the

beauty of Jesus is seen more clearly as we work these things out, as we have a humble desire to follow him in the ways that he leads us, even when they're uncomfortable.

we create a community where the beauty of Christ is seen more and more, where the lost come and they see something different, and they're drawn to here and say, what is it that makes this place, what is the heart of this that's changing everything?

Well, of course, it's Jesus, the one man sent by God to be the mediator between God and man, to redeem us. So let's hear Paul's words in verse 4 as a heartbeat.

that all people, all kinds of people would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. And may the God who has saved us through the ransom of his son, when would he get all the glory as we pray, as we preach, as we live out these truths together.

[43:53] Let me pray. God, our Father, as Ryan already prayed, these are difficult verses for us in our culture and our context with all our different backgrounds and maybe some of our experiences of these things.

Lord, I do pray that as we try and work these things out, we would continue to let our love for one another, our love for you, be at the very center of this fellowship.

worship, that you would help us to work these things out in such a way that they do glorify you and they are for our mutual good and for the extension of your purposes in us and through us.

Lord, forgive us for the ways in which we have got this wrong, in our homes and in our churches.

Lord, we ask for forgiveness for the ways in which these have been misappropriated by believers and ask, Lord, that for us, that you would continue redeeming purposes in us, in mutual submission to you, seeking to serve one another in the ways that you've called us to serve, for each other's prospering.

For your glory and for our good, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.