

“Reading the Bible as a Whole: Coming To Grips With I Timothy 2:12”

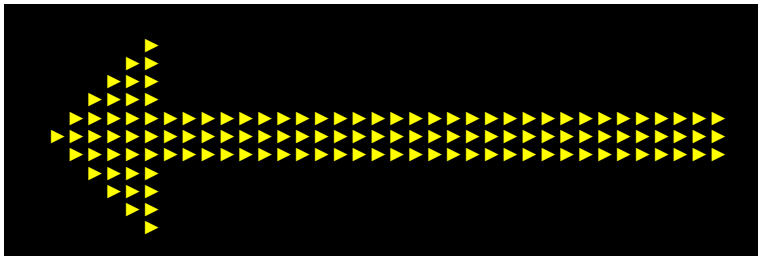
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October 2008

CHILDREN’S MOMENTS

I want to show you part of a sign. Most of it is covered up. Which way do you think the sign pointing?



Now here’s the actual sign:



Now what do we learn from this?

**You have to see
the WHOLE thing!**

Suppose you are reading through Luke’s Gospel some day, and you come across this verse:

**If anyone comes to me and does not hate
father and mother, wife and children,
brothers and sisters—yes, even life
itself—such a person cannot be my
disciple.**

Luke 14:26

What does that mean?

But when you read further, you find that Matthew's version of the same saying of Jesus is:

If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even life itself—such a person cannot be my disciple.
Luke 14:26

Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.
Matthew 10:37

And when we read the rest of the Bible we find many many things like:

If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even life itself—such a person cannot be my disciple.
Luke 14:26

Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.
Matthew 10:37

**God is love . . .
We love because he first loved us . . .
Love your enemies . . .**

So what do we learn?

**You have to see
the WHOLE thing**



THE SERMON

Today I'd like to talk with you about **METHODOLOGY**.

Methodology

I hope you saw when I talked with the children that “method” in reading the Bible makes a *world* of difference! What I want to try to further demonstrate is that reading any verse in the Bible, and especially verses that are hard to understand, or verses which seem to point in a different direction than other verses in the Bible, requires that “**you have to see the WHOLE thing**”!

Methodology

**You have to see
the WHOLE thing**



We looked at one example with the children. Here's another.

I Corinthians 15:29

"Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?"

I Corinthians 15:29

"Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?"



When was the last time we had someone here receive baptism on behalf of a dead person?

Never? Why not? It's here in the Bible, isn't it?! Why don't we do such things? Aren't we supposed to be a "biblical" church?

BAPTISM

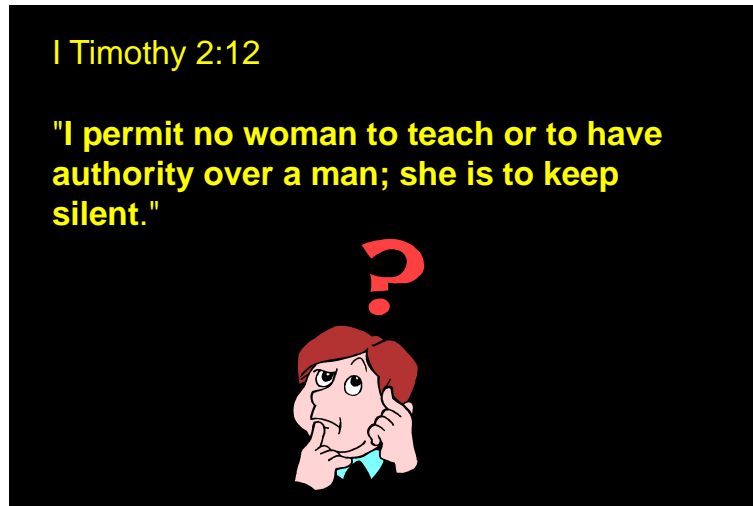
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Something you do on behalf of a dead person ???

Something God/the church does with you that enacts dying and rising to new life with Jesus and your initiation into the church

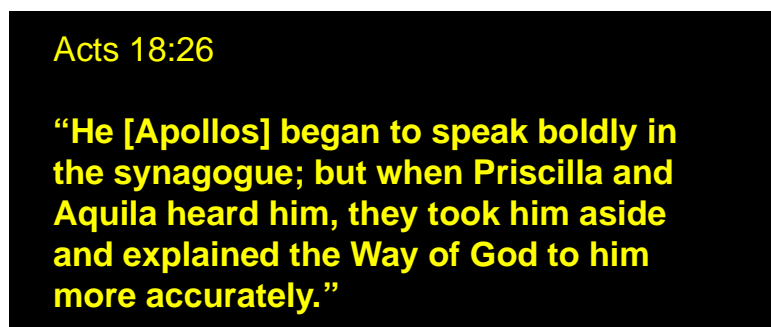
. . . . Yes. What exactly the verse is referring to we do not know! And we have no other Biblical references to anything *like* being baptized on behalf of a dead person. **And** everything we do know from the rest of the Bible and from our study of biblical culture points **away** from believing in any kind of baptism *for a dead person*. So we don't do it – **even though there is a Bible verse referring to that practice!!!**

Now to the passage I want us to focus on today:



What on earth did Paul mean? Why do I ask that? Because this passage seems to be in conflict with some of the other passages in the New Testament. Part of our problem is that reading the New Testament letters is something like listening to one end of a phone conversation. You're never absolutely sure what the context is for what they are saying.

Here are some of the passages which seem to point in the opposite direction:



Who is doing the teaching of Apollos? - Both Priscilla(a woman--who, by the way, is named first) and Aquila.

Acts 21:8-9

“The next day we left and came to Caesarea; and we went into the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven, and stayed with him. He had four unmarried daughters* who had the gift of prophecy.”

Who is doing the prophesying? - The daughters of Philip!

In Romans 16, Paul mentions several women in his list of personal greetings to key people in the church.

In Romans 16, key people in the church:

- the deacon Phoebe (v. 1).
- Priscilla and Aquila (v. 3)
- Mary (v. 6) “worked very hard among you.”
- Tryphena and Tryphosa (v. 12).
- Persis (v. 12) “worked hard in the Lord”
- Rufus' mother (v. 13).
- Neurus' sister (v. 15).

In I Corinthians we find things that seem headed in *both* directions.

I Corinthians

**Instructions for women
who are prophesying**



**Women should keep quiet
and ask their husbands at
home.**

There are instructions for women prophesying in church. There are also (in a passage about disorder in the church) words about the inappropriateness of women speaking in church. They should inquire of their husbands at home.

And, in several of Paul's letters we find problems of serious infighting involving women. In the letters to Timothy especially, problems involving women keep surfacing.

II Timothy 3:6-7

"For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, ⁷who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth "

In I Timothy 5:11-15 we get further hints that women were a source of significant problems in the church there.

I Timothy 5:11-15

"Refuse to put younger widows on the list; for when their sensual desires alienate them from Christ, they want to marry, ¹²and so they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge. ¹³Besides that, they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say."

"¹⁴So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us. ¹⁵For some have already turned away to follow Satan."

I point these passages out NOT to put women "down" but to show that the role and conduct of at least some women seems to be a special issue where Timothy serves.

One further piece of data is this. A focal point of religion in the city to which I Timothy was likely written (Ephesus) was a huge (the biggest) Temple of a female-only cult. The Temple of Artemis (that's her Greek name; the Romans called her Diana) was a massive structure which dominated the area; and, as befitted worshippers of a female deity, the priests were all **women**. **They** ruled the show and kept the men in their place!

So it's *not inconceivable* that in a specific context like that a church leader might write to one of his lieutenants on site: "**In your situation, I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man.**"

Thus the words we read in 1 Timothy 2:12 *may not* be a general rule for all times and all places, but rather instructions for a specific church situation. That is at least possible. We can say this much so far.

What we have then, is a less than clear picture. What shall we do?

- Flip a coin?

- Take the view that is most comfortable for us?

- Or, step back from the individual trees, and try to get a picture of the whole forest?

To my mind, this latter option (making sure we see the whole forest) is a more responsible way of handling Scripture.

So let's do that. We want to get at what is foundational.

Where do we go in the Bible for input about what is basic?

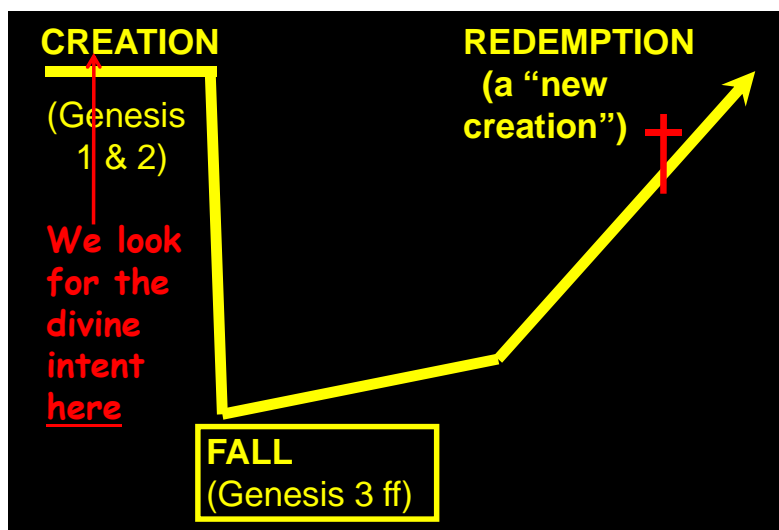
One of the best places to go is **the Creation narratives**.

The Creation narratives (Genesis chapters 1 and 2)

Jesus did this in correcting Pharisees who had taken an Old Testament accommodation to life in a sinful world and then had acted as if it was the original intent. I'm thinking of the divorce issue. They had drifted into a very lax view of divorce, and were quoting a verse in Deuteronomy as support for getting a new and prettier wife if yours burned the toast. (Let's admit it -- if you're creative enough you can find a verse in the Bible to proof-text almost anything!) But Jesus forced them to begin to think about the nature of marriage by going back to the creation narratives. He says they use something permitted because of hardness of heart, but then says, "But from the beginning it was not so: and quotes from Genesis 1 & 2. He knows that if we start with data from after the Fall, we may already be on the wrong track!

So if we want to discover the divine intent for male-female relationships and roles, we do not dive into the middle of the Old Testament after what God intended has been thoroughly messed up by sin. Nor do we start with some hard-to-understand verse in a letter addressed to a specific problems in particular churches. We go back to the Creation narratives of Genesis 1 and 2.

This diagram shows where we are going.



We'll start with creation, then we'll look at what the Fall did, then we'll look at redemption.

We start with Genesis 5:1-2.

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female; at the time they were created, he blessed them and called them "man."

Genesis 5:1-2

There we find that

Man as the Image of God \neq male or female.

Man as the Image of God = male plus female.

The same thing is made clear in Genesis 1:27.

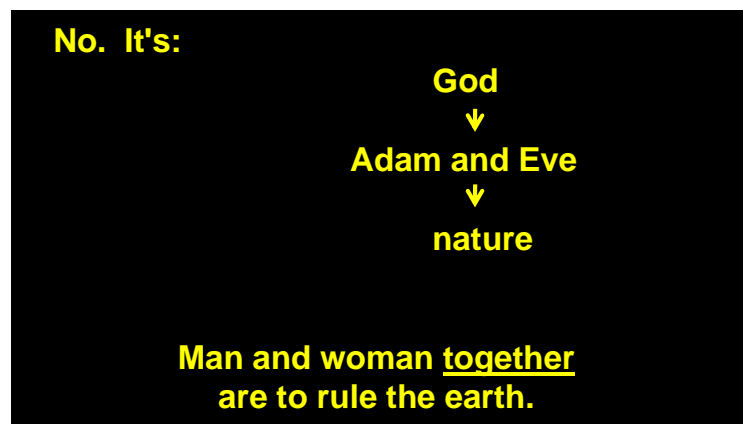
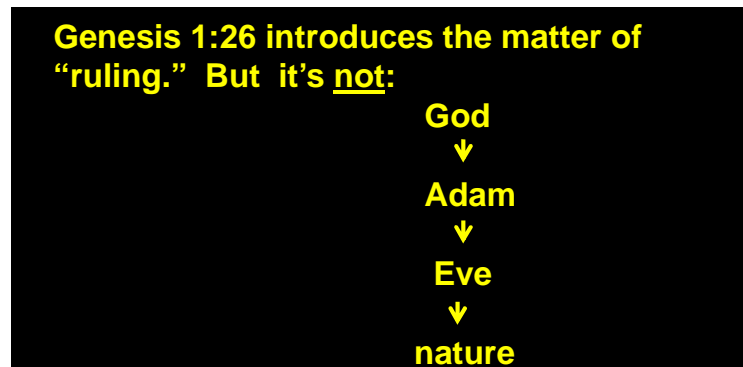
So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

Do you see the parallels? Twice it is asserted that God created man in his own image. The third time the reference to the image of God is replaced by "male and female." What we are being taught is that neither man nor woman fully expresses the divine image; it takes the partnership of man *and* woman, in fellowship together, to fully express God's glory. The woman, in her personality and sensitivities, reflects some of God that the man does not, and therefore it takes both of them to express the divine image and to create the Godlike and Christlike community.

The second thing to note is this. In Genesis 1:26, the previous verse, the

matter of *ruling* is introduced.



So we learn from the creation narratives that to express fully the image of God there has to be **man plus woman**. And we find to that **man and woman together** are to rule the earth.

But what God intended was terribly distorted by the entry of sin into the world. Thus we read in Genesis 3 about the many consequences of sin. We read of the repercussions for the serpent, and then for the woman and man. There is pain in childbirth. And the woman will now have a strong urge to possess her man. [I can't take time to get into the linguistic details here.] But while she yearns to possess, she will actually be possessed: "**and he will rule over you**" is the curse we hear. To love and to cherish as joint bearers of the Image has turned into a tug of war and the exercise of power and control. Here, for the first time we **do** have a hierarchical statement in which men are to dominate women, but it's not **Gospel**. It's a part of the **curse**!

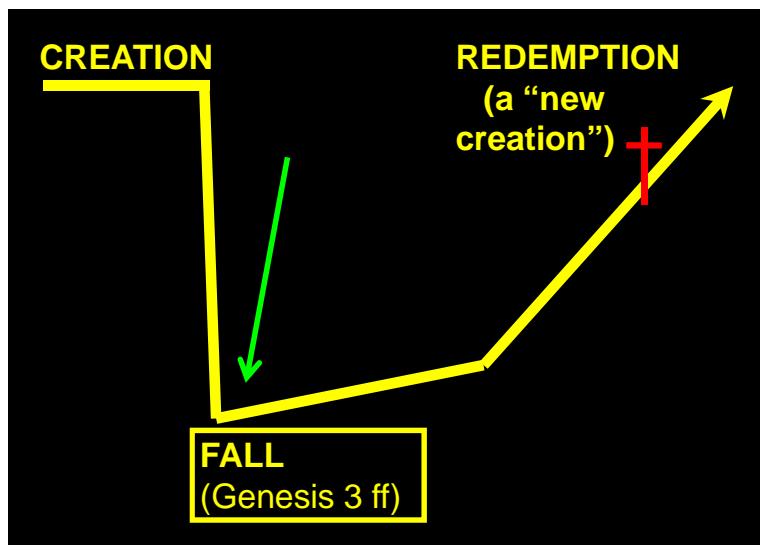
Thus, if we want to use images of hierarchy (and that needs to be thought

through carefully):



I move “nature” after the fall, for it seems clear than now, even nature can play an adversarial role to the human.

Now we're down in the ditch which results from human sin.



It has both a dark side and a side showing some light. Here are some of the features of the dark side.

First there's **polygamy**, where the man can have more than one wife. Then there's a **male oppressiveness** whereby women were treated as inferiors in many ways. A young woman could have her decisions nullified by her father in

ways a young man could not. Wives lacked powers and rights husbands had.

Then there was a **double standard on adultery**. Adultery came to be considered a violation of the man's property. Note the tenth commandment:

You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

A man was **subject to capital punishment** if he has sex with a married or engaged woman, since he violated his neighbour's possession. However, to have sex with a single woman was not punishable by death, since she was not yet some man's "possession".

And the Old Testament **divorce regulations** were designed to give a man a way to put away a wife he no longer wanted.

That's a bit of the dark side. But there were hints of light too. The prophetic ministry was the highest religious function in the old covenant. The people **spoke to God** through the priest, but **God spoke to the people** through the prophet, who especially wore the mantle of divine authority. Although statistically the majority of the Old Testament prophets were male, the Bible refers to **several prophetesses** and describes them as exercising the same kind of authority in the religious sphere as their male counterparts (**Miriam, Deborah, Huldah**, and so on).

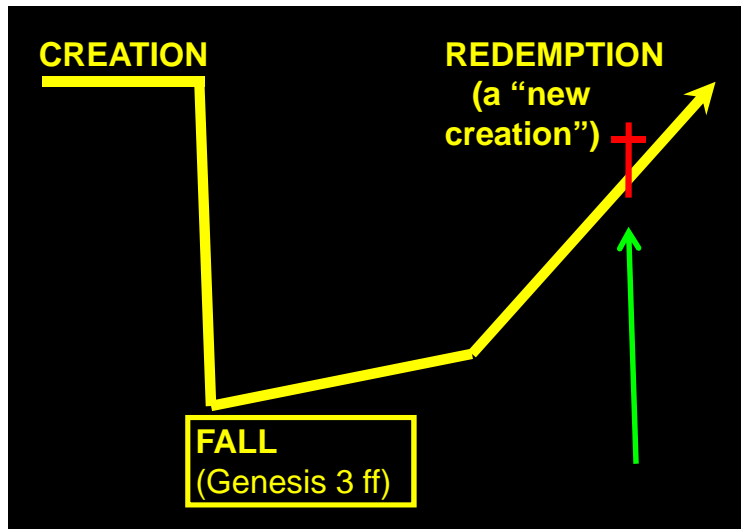
Women were also at times involved as authority figures in civil life too. There is the story of **Deborah**, God's answer in a desperate time in that male-dominated era. As a prophetess she exercised spiritual leadership, as a "judge" she exercised judicial and political power. Eventually she became involved in directing the battlefield strategy and her people won a decisive victory.

There were times when a woman had to take major responsibility for a family, as in the story of Abigail and Nabal (in I Samuel 25).

To sum up, the mixture of positive and negative elements make the time of the old covenant one of compromise between the pressures of **the creation ideal** and **the curse of the fall**. Signs of both are present in uneasy accommodation

that marks the time between the disastrous consequences of the fall and the coming age of redemption, when God's original purposes are to be restored.

But Christians believe that the day of redemption has dawned!



Now when Jesus came, did he base his definition of male/female relations in the creation ideal, or in the realities of the fall, . . . or what?

By Jesus' day, the dark side of the old covenant story had almost entirely taken over. Women were generally viewed as being responsible for the evil in the world. Men could be heard thanking God that they had not been made a Gentile, a dog or a woman. Women were strictly segregated from the social and religious life of their communities as inferior and unteachable creatures, and they were sometimes mercilessly oppressed within the seclusion of their husbands' or fathers' homes.

Jesus' understanding of his mission led him in the opposite direction. Compared to literary works of the same era, the Gospels contain an inordinate number of references to women. Remarkably for literature coming from that sexist, male-dominated culture, not in a single case is a woman "put down," reproached, humiliated or cast in one of the lewd stereotypes common in that day. Males, especially establishment-type, power-wielding men, are often the subject of severe criticism, but not women.

Predictably, Jesus sees unnoticed women, identifies their need, and thrusts

them onto the centre stage of the redemptive story.

Unnoticed women:

- **Peter's mother-in-law.**
- **The woman with the haemorrhage.**
- **The daughter of Jairus.**
- **The widow of Nain.**
- **The crippled woman of Lk 13:10ff.**

There are also women as faith models. Jesus reminded the people in the synagogue of Nazareth that in the days of the great prophet Elijah, it was a woman--and a Gentile woman to boot--who became the exclusive recipient of God's mercy in a time of crisis. There are others:

- **The Queen of the South in Luke 11:31.**
- **The woman who finds the lost coin.**
- **There persistent widow.**
- **The poor widow's offering.**

Jesus was clearly taking steps to start undoing the fall. Adultery is redefined. Divorce as understood by Judaism was revoked. Prostitutes were redeemed.

It is true that Jesus trained twelve male disciples as the pioneer task force that would initiate the Gospel mission. But his discipling ministry was not limited to these twelve men. If a disciple is to be defined as a follower, a student and a servant, the women who travelled with Jesus and with the Twelve during his ministry functionally qualify as disciples too.

Why were the official twelve all men? Probably because only men would be perceived as leaders in the world into which the Gospel first went. If Jesus had chosen six official woman apostles, the early church would have been laughed out of most of the towns they entered.

But there are so many other indications that though Jesus had to adapt a little to the fallen situation in which he functioned, he was starting a revolution.

- First news of the incarnation
- First miracle
- First Samaritan convert
- First Gentile convert
- First resurrection
- First perception of the meaning of the cross
- First witness to the resurrection

Then, when we come to the redeemed community we see the same transition taking place. On the day of Pentecost, the great gift long awaited, the gift of the Spirit, is "**for men who are alone to be the leaders.**" **No!** In Acts 2:17, Peter quotes the prophet:

**I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and your daughters will
prophecy, your young men will see
visions, your old men will dream dreams.
Even on my servants, both men and
women, I will pour out my Spirit in those
days.**

Acts 2:17

In the community of the age of redemption, the community of the Spirit, sex difference will be irrelevant.

Rank and class distinctions will be irrelevant too! Here's what Paul says is now true in Christ.

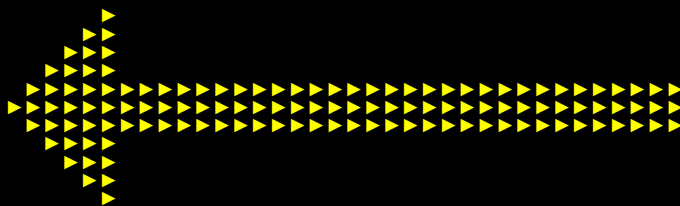
In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

Do you see what is happening?! Racial, class and gender distinctions are irrelevant in the life of the church. We see in the actions of Jesus (which are normative for Christians) and in the teaching of the early church a conscious awareness that God was calling for a reversal of the tragic results of the fall and a deep commitment to treating people (including women) the way God had intended in the first place.

Let's now try to sum up. We agreed already that:

**You have to see
the WHOLE thing**



**You have to see
the WHOLE thing!**

**If anyone comes to me and does not hate
father and mother, wife and children,
brothers and sisters—yes, even life
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Luke 14:26

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Matthew 10:37

God is love . . .

We love because he first loved us . . .

Love your enemies . . .

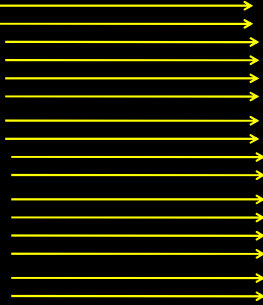
**You have to see
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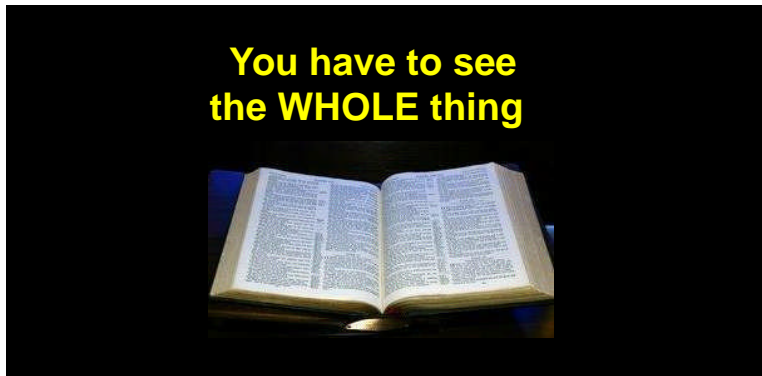
BAPTISM

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Something you do on behalf of a dead person ???



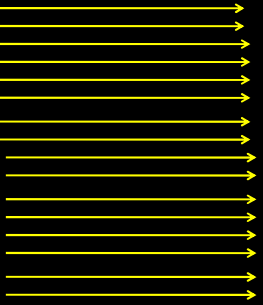
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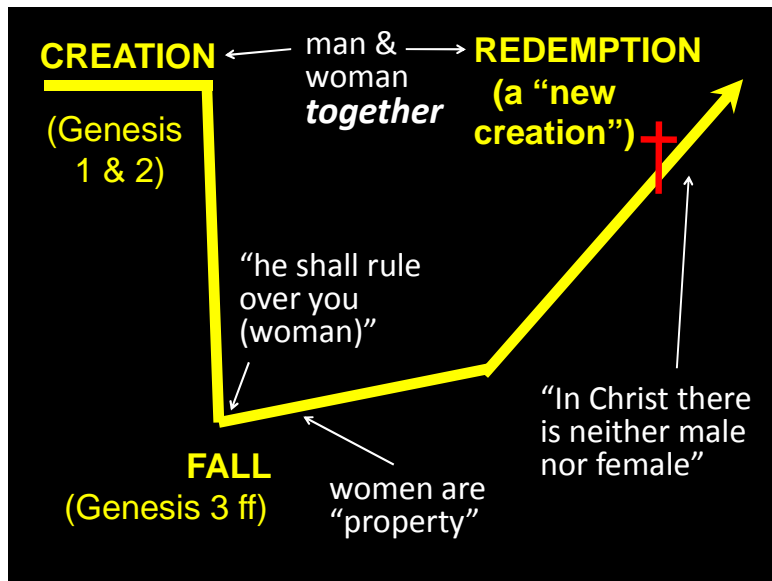
GENDER

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Women should not teach men???



In Christ there is neither male nor female . . .



To accurately understand any particular verse of the Bible

THE BOTTOM LINE

You have to see the **WHOLE** thing



THE BOTTOM LINE

And when you do, you see how God is at work to redeem what went wrong. He is not willing to leave us in the mess we made, but he is building a new community where all the old barriers and estrangements ARE NO MORE! Yes, redemption is not fully visible yet (we still await Jesus *second* coming to make

all things new) and yes, the new community does not show all the signs of redemption yet, but redemption **has** come! And our Redeemer **is coming again!**

That's the picture we get when we **see the WHOLE thing!**

Praise God! That's worth celebrating!

IN THE BULLETIN

WOMEN AND MINISTRY - SOME GOOD READING

A paper outlining a biblical approach to this question and other materials are available on the Free Methodist Church in Canada web site:

http://www.fmc-canada.org/who/scod_pages/women-in-ministry.html

In 1891 the founding Bishop of the Free Methodist denomination, B. T. Roberts, wrote the book, *Ordaining Women*. The whole book is at:

http://www.freemethodistchurch.org/pdfs/resources/Ordaining_Women.PDF

If you don't want to read all 106 pages, you can find a summary (in Bishop Roberts' own words) compiled by Dr. Howard Snyder (our Wesley Chair professor at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto) at:

<http://www.freemethodistchurch.org/PDF%20Files/Beliefs/Where%20we%20stand/Women%20in%20Ministry/Women%20Leaders%20-%20Snyder-Roberts.pdf>

If you would like a copy of the text and PowerPoint of this message, just contact <johnvlainic@rogers.com>.

Note: To find scripture references for people, policies, and events cited in the reviews of history, simply use a concordance and seek occurrences of the appropriate word(s). A useful on-line concordance can be found at <<http://www.biblegateway.com>>.