WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE BIBLE
Eve and Gender Equality
God creates the woman because it is “not good (טוב; tov) for the human to be alone” (Genesis 2:18a).

The woman is an equal helper who fulfills the goodness of God’s creation.
“God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good (טוב; tov).” (Genesis 1:31)
“The Lord God said,
'It is not good (טוב; tov) that the human (אדם; ha’adam) should be alone; I will make an ezer k’negdo (עזר נגדו; ezer k’negdo).”’
(Genesis 2:18)

“I am poor and needy; hasten to me, God! You are my helper (עזר; ezer) and my deliverer.”
(Psalm 70:5)
“She shall be called ‘woman’ (השה; ishah) because she was taken out of ‘man’ (יה; ish). Therefore a man (יה; ish) shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his woman (השה; ishah).” (Genesis 2:23-24)
Genesis stresses the fundamental equality between men and women.
“The Lord God caused a deep sleep (תֶּרֶדֶמָה; *tardemah*) to fall upon the human (הָאָדָם; *ha’adam*), and while he slept took one of his *tsela* (צֵלֶע) and closed up flesh in place of it.”

(*Genesis 2:21*)
“Cast four rings of gold for [the Ark]... two rings on the one tsela (צלה) of it, and two rings on the other tsela (צלה) of it.” (Exodus 25:12; cf. Exodus 25:14; 26:20-35; 27:7; 30:4; 36:25-32; 37:3-5, 27; 38:7; Ezekiel 41:5-11, 26)

“David and his men went along the road, while Shimei went along the tsela (צלה) of the hill opposite him.” (2 Samuel 16:13a)
“The Lord God caused a deep sleep (תרדמה; tardemah) to fall upon the human.” (Genesis 2:21a)

“The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision... and when the sun was going down, a deep sleep (תרדמה; tardemah) fell upon Abram... and, behold, a smoking pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces [of the animals].” (Genesis 15:1, 12, 17)
“While he slept [the Lord God] took one of his sides and closed up (שלם; \textit{sagar}) flesh (בשר; \textit{basar}) in place of it.” (Genesis 2:21b)

“Solomon... closed up (שלם; \textit{sagar}) the gap [in the wall] of the city of David his father.” (1 Kings 11:27)

“A man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (בשר; \textit{basar}).” (Genesis 2:24)
“The human said, ‘Finally, this [one] is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.’

(Genesis 2:23a)
Eve’s conversation with the snake in Eden ends badly (obviously), but Scripture actually presents her as the first “Torah scholar.” That is, while the end result of the conversation leaves something to be desired, Eve’s intention was based on a well-known practice of legal interpretation that the rabbis would later call, “building a fence around the Torah.”
“Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and build a fence around the Torah.” (Mishnah, Pirke Avot 1:1) [c. 200 CE]
“The Lord God commanded the human, saying, ‘From any of the trees of the garden you may eat freely, but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat, for when you eat of it you shall surely die.’” (Genesis 2:16-17)
“[The snake] said to the woman, ‘Did God really say: You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’ And the woman said to the snake, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but God said: You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.” (Genesis 3:2-3)
“You have heard it said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder’ [Exodus 20:13]; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be liable to judgment.”

(Matthew 5:21-22)
“Do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in through the gates of Jerusalem.... Bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy and do no work on it” (Jeremiah 17:21, 24; cf. Exodus 20:8-10)
“As it began to get dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. And I stationed some of my servants at the gates, so that no burden would be brought in on the Sabbath day.”
(Nehemiah 13:19)
Despite Adam and Eve’s blunder in Eden, God does not abandon them; rather, God remains with the couple and works directly with Eve.

“Now the human knew his wife and she conceived, and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man with the Lord.’” (Genesis 4:1)
“Do bear with me, for I feel a divine possessiveness for you... but I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere a pure devotion to Messiah.... And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! [...] I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now in my absence... since you seek the proof that Messiah is speaking in me, he is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.” (2 Corinthians 11:1-3, 11; 13:2-3)
WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE BIBLE
Female Leadership in Ancient Israel
Women occupied various leadership roles in ancient Israel, including positions of both prophetic and priestly service.
“Miriam the prophet (מרים; neviah), the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing.” (Exod 15:20; cf. Jgs 4:4; 2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chron 34:22; Isa 8:3; also Anna in Lk 2:36)
“O my people... I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” (Micah 6:4)
“Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses... and they said, ‘Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?’ And the Lord heard it... and the anger of the Lord was kindled against them.... And Aaron turned toward Miriam, and behold, she had a skin ailment (ከንንር; metsora’at). And Aaron said to Moses, “Oh, my lord, do not lay sin upon us because we have done foolishly and have sinned’.... So Miriam was shut outside the camp seven days, and the people did not set out on the march until Miriam was brought in again.” (Numbers 12:1-2, 9-11, 15)
“[Moses] made the basin of bronze and its stand of bronze, from the mirrors of the ministering women (צובות; tsovet) who ministered at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.” (Exod 38:8)
Deborah is both a prophet and the best judge in Israel’s history.
“Deborah, wife of Lappidot (אשת לפידות; 'eshet lappidot), was a prophet; she ruled as judge of Israel at the time. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came to her for judgment (or “justice,” מִשְפָּט; mishpat).” (Judges 4:4-5)

While Deborah’s description, אשת לפידות, is often translated “wife of Lappidot,” an equally plausible translation would be: “woman of flames.”
“She summoned Barak... and said to him, ‘The Lord, the God of Israel, has commanded: Go, march up to mount Tabor... and I will draw Sisera, Jabin’s army commander... toward you up to the Wadi Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hands.’ But Barak said to her, ‘If you will go with me, I will go; if not, I will not go.’ She answered, ‘Very well, I will go with you. But there will be no glory for you in the course you are taking, for then the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.’” (Judges 4:4-9)
“I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel’....
Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, break out in song.... The princes of Issachar came with Deborah... and the land had rest for forty years.”
(Judges 5:7, 12, 15, 31)

“[Samson] judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.”
(Judges 15:20)
Like Deborah, Yael also saves Israel from military enemies:

“Sisera fled on foot to the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was a peace [treaty] between the king Jabin... and the house of Heber the Kenite. Jael came out to greet Sisera and said to him, ‘Come in, my lord, come in here, don’t be afraid.’ So he entered her tent and she covered him with a blanket. He said to her, ‘Please let me have some water. I am thirsty.’ She opened a skin of milk and gave him some to drink, and she covered him again.” (Judges 4:17-19)
“He said to her, ‘Stand at the entrance of the tent. If anybody comes and asks, saying, ‘Is there a man here?’ Say: No.’ Then Jael... took a tent peg and grasped the mallet. When he was fast asleep... she approached him quietly and drove the tent peg through his temple till it went down to the ground, and he died.”

(Judges 4:19-21)
“Most blessed of women is Jael... of tent-dwelling women most blessed. [Sisera] asked for water and she gave him milk; she brought him curds in a noble’s bowl. She reached out her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workman’s mallet. She struck Sisera; she crushed his head; she shattered and pierced his temple. Between her feet he sank... [and] there he fell dead.”

(Jgs 5:24-27)
The “woman of valor” provides care (including money and food) for her household, and dispenses wisdom and teaching for her children and husband.
“A woman of valor (אשת חיל; eshet hayil) who can find? For her value is far above jewels. Her husband’s heart trusts her, and he will have no lack of gain.... and [she] provides food for her household. She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. She dresses herself with strength, and makes her arms strong. She perceives that her merchandise is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hand to the needy. She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all in her household are clothed in scarlet.”

(Proverbs 31:10-11, 15-21)
“She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.” (Proverbs 31:26-28)
“Does wisdom not call? Does not understanding raise her voice? [...] At the entrance of the portals she cries aloud: ‘To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of humanity. Simple ones, learn prudence; fools, learn sense. Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right, for my mouth will utter truth.... For wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.”

(Proverbs 8:1-7, 11)
WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE BIBLE
Both before and after Jesus’ ministry, Jewish women serve as prophets and teachers who enlighten others (including men).
“A prophet, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Ashe... did not depart from the Temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer all night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.” (Lk 2:36-38)
A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus — though he knew only of the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” (Acts 18:24-26)
Women who followed Jesus—right alongside his twelve male disciples—funded Jesus’ ministry and the early Christian movement.
“[Jesus] went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.” (Lk 8:1-3)
“There was in Joppa a disciple (μαθητρια; mathetria) named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.” (Acts 9:36-37)
“And when [Peter] arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.” (Acts 9:38-42)
The fact that women are the first witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection is significant, but not because a woman’s testimony was “unreliable” in ancient Judaism.
“It was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them nonsense, and they did not believe them.” (Lk 24:10-11)
“Let not the testimony of a woman be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.”

(Josephus, Antiquities 4.8.15)
“Two prostitutes came to the king [Solomon] and stood before him. The one woman said, ‘Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. And we were alone. There was no one else with us in the house... and this woman’s son died in the night because she lay on him. She arose at midnight and took my son from beside me while your servant slept, and laid him at her chest, and laid her dead son at my chest.... but when I looked at him closely in the morning, behold, he was not the child I had borne.”’

(1 Kings 3:16:21)
“But the other woman said, ‘No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours.’ The first said, ‘No, the dead child is yours, and living child mine.’ Thus they spoke before the king. Then the king said, ‘The one [woman] says, ‘This is my son who is alive, and your son is dead’; and the other says, ‘No; rather, your son is dead, and my son is the living one.’

(1 Kings 3:22-23)
“The king said, ‘Divide the living child into two, and give half to one and half to the other.’ Then the [one] woman... said to the king, ‘Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.’ But the other one said, ‘He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him.’ Then the king answered, ‘Give the child to the first woman... she is his mother.’ And all Israel heard of the judgment the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.”

(1 Kings 3:25-28)
“In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’” (Lk 18:2-5)
"The angel answered [Zechariah], 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. Behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe in my words.' (Lk 1:19-20; cf. Lk 8:12; 20:5; 22:67)
“This is what was uttered through the prophet Joel (2:28-32): ‘In the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy.... Even on my male servants and female servants, in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.’” (Acts 2:16-18)
WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE BIBLE
Women in Pauline Epistles

(Part 1)
At the end of Romans, Paul mentions the women with whom he works, and identifies them as holding prominent leadership roles in the churches.
“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon (diákonos, διάκονος) of the church at Kenchrea, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of holy ones, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron (or “protector,” prostatis; προστάτις) of many and of myself as well.”
(Romans 16:1-2)
“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.”

(Romans 16:3-4)
“Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my compatriots who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles (apostolois, ἀποστόλοις) and they were in Christ before I was.... Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.... Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister.” (Romans 16:6-7, 12, 15)
Paul describes women as his missionary equals, and famously proclaims that there is no gender hierarchy when it comes to one’s position in the Messiah.
“I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true yokefellow, help these women who in the gospel have labored side by side (συναθλέω; sunathléo) with me.” (Philippians 4:2-3)
“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no ‘male and female’ (ἀρσεν καὶ θῆλυ) for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:27-28)
“God created humanity in his own image, in the image of God he created it, male and female (᾿άρσεν καὶ θῆλυ) he created them.” (Genesis 1:27 LXX)

“If anyone is in Christ, [that person] is a new creation. The old has passed away and, behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)
“Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head.”
(1 Corinthians 11:4-5)
“In the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy.... Even on my male servants and female servants, in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.” (Acts 2:16-18; cf. Joel 2:28-32)
Ephesians’ “wives and husbands” passage *needs* to be read in context. Some English versions insert a header in the middle of the message, which makes it look like the text only demands that women be submissive. However, there is no reason to interrupt the message in this way, and it leaves us with a skewed picture of what Paul is saying.
Wives and Husbands

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord....
“Wives, submit (hupotásso; ὑποτάσσω) to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also should wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” (Ephesians 5:22-25)
“Give thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting (hupotássō; ὑποτάσσω) to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit (hupotássō; ὑποτάσσω) to your husbands, as to the Lord.... Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”
(Ephesians 5:20-22, 25)
The Letter of First Peter, though not written by Paul, also contains an exhortation for wives to submit to husbands – and needs to be read with the same sensitivity to context with which we read Ephesians.
“Wives, be in submission (hupotásso; ὑποτάσσω) to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives.” (1 Pet 3:1)
“Slaves, be in submission (ὑποτάσσο; ὑποτάσσω) to your masters with all respect.” (1 Pet 2:18)

“Wives, be in submission (ὑποτάσσο; ὑποτάσσω) to your own husbands.” (1 Pet 3:1)
“You who are younger, be in submission (hupotássō; ὑποτάσσω) to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility (tapeinophrosúne; ταπεινοφροσύνη) toward one another, for God ‘opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’ [Prov 3:34]”
(1 Pet 5:5; NA²⁸ critical Greek edition)

“All of you be in submission (hupotássō; ὑποτάσσω) to one another, and be clothed in humility.”
(1 Pet 5:5; Textus Receptus and other manuscript traditions)
WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE BIBLE
Women in Pauline Epistles (Part 2)
Thus far in our course, we have encountered over thirty (30+) biblical passages that present women as both equal to men and in various levels of authority. We have seen female prophets, ministers, judges, military leaders, bread-wonners, disciples, apostles, missionaries, evangelists, deacons, and teachers of both women and men. All this, and we are still yet to discuss Jesus’ mother Mary, Elizabeth, Mary and Martha, or any of the other women with whom Jesus interacts in Mark, Matthew, and John.
In contrast to all of these examples, there are only two passages that prohibit women from teaching or having authority over men explicitly. Of course, these two texts must be taken seriously as Scripture; however, we must also keep in mind that the vast majority of the Bible’s descriptions of, and prescriptions for, believing women is positive and promote female autonomy and authority.
“As in all the churches of the saints, the women should silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them asks their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.”

(1 Corinthians 14:34-35)
This statement about women keeping quiet in churches is in tension with Paul’s statements about women speaking in worship earlier in the same chapter of 1 Corinthians:

“Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head.” (1 Cor 11:4-5)
In several ancient manuscripts, these verses (14:34-35) do not appear at this point in Paul’s letter, but rather as an addendum at the end of the chapter (after v. 40). Since there is no other instances of a block of text moving around in the Pauline corpus, it should alert us to an editorial instance that is contrary to all other scribal convention. Further, if one reads the letter without these verses, the flow of Paul’s argument is much smoother:
“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. [omitting vv. 34-35] Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.” (1 Cor 14:31-32, 36-37)
(1) Manuscript MS 88 does not contain 1 Cor 14:34-35 at all; (2) the oldest complete Greek Bible we have, *Codex Vaticanus*, includes a marginal mark next to these verses indicating that they are a later addition to the text; (3) in his early Latin translation (546 CE), Bishop Victor of Capuna writes 14:33-40 in the margin, indicating that he thought these verses were not original; (4) there are an unusual amount of textual variants for 14:34-35; (5) no Patristic writer (early church leader) mentions these verses.
All of these issues (along with several others) have led most scholars to conclude that 1 Cor 14:34-35 is a later “interpolation” that is not original to Paul.
Several options exist for approaching 14:34-35. One possibility is that the command for women to be silent is limited to the women in Corinth.

However, this interpretation is unconvincing because the texts states, “In all the churches of the saints, the women should silent in the churches” (14:34).
Perhaps the silence command should be limited to “wives,” rather than all “women” (the Greek word is the same), since the texts says for women to “ask their husbands at home” if they think of a question at church. This is possible (though not explicit), but this would still be in tension with the fact that married women like Priscila spoke and taught *men* in Messiah-centered worship settings and led house churches (*Acts 18:24-26; 1 Cor 16:19*; cf. *Rom 16:3-4*).
Perhaps the silence command should be limited to women who are “prophets,” since the surrounding context discusses prophets specifically. Yet, this remains in tension with the prior assumption that a woman “prays or prophesies” in church (11:5).
Perhaps the silence command is Paul’s quotation of the Corinthians’ beliefs, rather than his own belief. In other words, the Corinthians want to silence women in church, and Paul cites their opinion as a means of refuting it. Again, this is possible, but the text gives us no indication that Paul is quoting anyone else (cf. 7:1: “Now concerning matters about which you wrote: ‘It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.’”).
1 Timothy 2:11-14 sounds a lot like the silence command in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35:

“Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit not woman to teach or have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, and then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”

(1 Timothy 2:11-14)
“God our Savior... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:3-6)

Thus “being saves through childbirth” may mean safety through the pain of labor. (cf. Gen 3:16)
The prohibition against female teaching and authority in 1 Timothy is in tension with female figures elsewhere in Scripture who are equal with men, and both teach and exercise authority (remember: we’ve seen 30+ and have by no means exhausted the examples). More, 1 Timothy is in tension with what Paul himself says elsewhere:
“Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” (1 Tim 2:14)

“Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin.” (Romans 5:12)

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Messiah shall all be made alive.” (1 Cor 15:22)
In rabbinic literature, there is an interpretive method called *Barishonah* ("In the beginning") by which the rabbis interpret a verse of Scripture in light of what came before it. Jesus does this too:
“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said: A man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh [Gen 2:24]? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What God has therefore joined together, let not humanity separate.’ [The Pharisees] said to him, ‘Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away [Deut 24:1-4]?’ He said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” (Matthew 19:4-8)
Much the same argument could be made with respect to 1 Timothy 2:11-14 vs. any number of earlier verses in Scripture: “Yes, 1 Timothy 2 says that women are not permitted to teach or have authority over a man, but from the beginning it was not so.”
Just as Jesus says that Moses allowed divorce due to the hardness of heart First Timothy begins with a presentation of church members in Ephesus who display a hardness of heart:

“Remain in Ephesus so that you may change certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, not to devote themselves to myths or endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than good order from God that is by faith. **The aim of our charge is love that comes from a pure heart** and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion... without understanding what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.” (1 Tim 1:3-7)
Some churches have adopted the dictum that they are “First Timothy Churches,” meaning that they follow 1 Timothy when it comes to women being excluded from teaching and/or leadership. But in focusing exclusively on this single passage, they are, by definition, ignoring the rest of Scripture. Thus, quite ironically, by choosing to make a blanket ruling about women’s roles based on this charge to keep women silent, these “First Timothy Churches” are silencing the rest of God’s Word.
The beginning of Luke’s Gospel focuses on Elizabeth and Mary to highlight the joy of Jesus’ advent; at the same time, the language that Luke uses for the encounter between Elizabeth and Mary alludes to the reality of suffering as a follower of Yeshua – these women attest to the fact that joy is often coupled with persecution, but that those who suffer for following Jesus should be reminded of the surpassing joy of salvation that is the basis for their faith.
In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.... For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.” (Luke 1:39-42, 44)
“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.”

(Luke 6:22-23)
Mary’s song of praise, known as the Magnificat, echoes Hannah’s song of praise when she becomes pregnant with Samuel. Hannah’s song even alludes to the messianic expectation to which God would respond by bring Jesus into the world.
“My life magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.... He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. He has filled the hungry with goodness and the rich he has sent away empty.” (Luke 2:46-47, 51-53)
“My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord... because I rejoice in your salvation.... The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.” (1 Samuel 2:1, 4-5, 7)
“The enemies of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; he will thunder in heaven against them. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and **exalt the horn** of his anointed (מַשִּׁיאָה; *mashiach*).” (1 Samuel 2:10)

“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has **exalted a horn** of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from old, that we would be **saved from our enemies**.” (Luke 1:68-71)
Jesus’ meeting with the Samaritan woman recalls a well-known “type scene” from Israel’s Scriptures, which shows how Jesus’ experience follows the many Israelite men who have interactions with women in foreign lands.
“[Jesus] came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a woman from Samaria came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’.... The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?’ .... Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’” (John 4:5-10)
“The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water (ὕδωρ τὸ ςῶν; hudor tò zon)? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?’” (John 4:11-12)

“[The priest] shall take the live bird with the cedarwood and the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water (מימ חיים; mayim hayim, lit. “living water”).” (Leviticus 14:6)
“Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east; as he looked, he saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for out of that well the flocks were watered. [The shepherds at the well] said [to Jacob]... ‘Here is [Laban’s] daughter Rachel, coming with the sheep.’ [Jacob] said, ‘Look, it is still broad daylight; it is not time for the animals to be gathered together’.... While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherd. And as soon as Jacob saw Rachel... [he] came near and rolled the stone from the well’s mouth and watered the flock of his mother’s brother Laban. Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and wept aloud.” (Genesis 29:1-11; cf. Isaac and Rebekah in Genesis 24; Moses and Zipporah in Exodus 2:15-22)
“Sir, I see you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you [Jews], but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews’. ... The woman said to him, ‘I know that the Messiah (Μεσσίας; Messías) is coming’ – who is called Christ (Χριστός; Christós) – ‘when he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am (ἐγώ εἰμι; ego eimi), the one who is speaking to you.’” (John 4:19-26)
“Just then Jesus’ disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, ‘What do you want?’ or, ‘Why are you speaking to her?’ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’.... Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony.”

(John 4:27-30, 39)
It is common in New Testament scholarship to assume that the disciples are astonished that Jesus talks a woman because doing so what discouraged in “Jewish culture” or prohibited by “the Rabbis.” To “show” this overarching prohibition, rabbinic literature is mined for one or two statements (taken out of context) that caution against male-female interaction. Jesus’ willingness to speak to the Samaritan woman, then, becomes proof that Jesus militated against his own Judaism and liberated women from an oppressive Judaic cultural system.
“Rabbi Yose ben Yohanan, a man of Jerusalem, said, ‘Let your house be open wide; let the poor be members of your household; and do not talk much with the wife (האישה; ha’ishah).’ This being said of one’s own wife, how much more so of another’s wife? Thus the sages say, ‘He who talks much with the woman (האישה; ha’ishah) makes evil for himself, neglecting the words of Torah, and his end is inheriting hell.” (Mishnah, Pirke Avot 1:5)
“Rabbi Yose the Galilean was walking along the way and met Berurya. He said to her, ‘By which road do we go to get to the city of Lod?’ She said to him, ‘Foolish Galilean, didn’t the sages say: Do not talk much with the woman? You should have said, ‘Where’s Lod?’” (Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 53b)
“Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ḥananya said, ‘One time I was staying at a certain inn and the hostess prepared me beans. On the first day I ate them and left nothing over, although proper etiquette dictates that one should leave over something on his plate. On the second day I again ate and left nothing over. On the third day she over-salted them so that they were inedible. As soon as I tasted them, I withdrew my hands from them.’ She said to me, ‘My Rabbi, why aren’t you eating beans as on the previous days?’ Not wishing to offend her, I said to her, ‘I have already eaten during the daytime.’...
...She said to me, ‘You should have withdrawn your hand from bread and left room for some beans.’ She then said to me, ‘My Rabbi, perhaps you did not leave a remainder of food on your plate on the first days, which is why you are leaving over food today. Isn’t this what the Sages say: One need not leave a remainder in the pot, but one must leave a remainder on the plate as an expression of etiquette?’ This is the incident in which a woman got the better of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Ḥananya.” (Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 53b)
Jesus’ encounter with the Gentile mother (called the “Syro-Phoenician woman” in Mark 7 and the “Canaanite woman” in Matthew 15) is based on a well-known narrative trope in ancient Jewish literature: the “teacher-student exchange.”
“A Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, ‘Have mercy on me, Lord, son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.’ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she is crying out after us.’ He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ But she came and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, help me.’ And he answered, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.’ She said, ‘Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.’ Then Jesus answered her, ‘Woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.’” (Matthew 15:21-28)
“Rabbi [Judah] opened his storehouses during a period of famine. He said, ‘Students of Scripture... may enter. But common people may not enter.’ Rabbi Jonathan... pressed in and entered. He said to [Rabbi Judah], ‘Rabbi, give me sustenance.’ [Judah] asked him, “Have you learned Scripture?” He said to him, “No”... “Then why should I give you sustenance?” “Give me sustenance like the dog and like the raven.” So he gave him sustenance. After he went away... Rabbi Simon... said to [Judah], ‘That was Rabbi Jonathan... your student who wishes never to receive benefit from the glory of the Torah.’ It was checked and found to be the case, so Rabbi [Judah] said, ‘All may enter.’” (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 8a)
WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE BIBLE