

2008 Winning Essay by Kiersten Camp

As I was poring over the Bible in search of passages that mentioned children for a course in “Children, Childhood, and Faith Formation,” I was particularly puzzled by 1 Timothy 2:15, which reads “yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.” Upon contemplation, I found myself asking: “Are women really saved through childbearing? Why would the author of 1 Timothy suggest childbearing as means to salvation? Who is required to continue in faith and love etc.? Does this verse have modern applications for children and women?” While I initially tried to push these questions aside, they provoked me to write my final research paper on this verse.

Nestled in the second set of stacks behind the reference desk of the Christopher Center lies the first resource I turned to, the Anchor Bible. Knowing this set of commentaries would serve as a launching pad for my research by providing me with short essays on my topic, I obtained the First Timothy volume and flipped through the pages until my eyes rested on a few explanations of the verse I wanted.

Pleased my preliminary search was fruitful, I took a seat in front of a computer and pulled up the Christopher Center’s webpage. Navigating my way to the Galileo Catalog, I typed in “first timothy 2:15” and proceeded to conduct a keyword search. Instantly, titles of several books pertaining to my topic were suggested such as *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence*. Happy the books were in the library, I checked some of them out. Later I discovered that they detailed much of the background information and cultural history necessary to get at the heart of my questions.

My quest at the library, however, would not be complete without utilizing the databases, which often supply current articles directly addressing specific aspects of a topic. Because my research was biblical, I clicked on the ATLA Religion Database. One of my favorites, ATLA is particularly useful because of its “scriptures” button, a feature which allows specific searches for any verse in the Bible, by retrieving articles that discuss that verse and surrounding ones. Expectantly, I typed “1 Timothy 2:15” into the box. Galatians 1 sprung to the top of the page. I blinked. Clearly, something was amiss. Diligently, I tried “First Timothy 2:15,” attempting to be more exact. Acts 1. Sighing, I flipped the order to “timothy first 2:15.” Finally, I had solved the mystery and was relieved that the database recognized Timothy as a valid book of the Bible. After being reminded that databases sometimes demand particularities and also of the usefulness of the “indexes” button when the search term may vary, my faith was restored as ATLA brought up valuable articles such as “Reading 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Its Literary Context.”

While I successfully had found several resources at the Christopher Center and through the databases, I turned my attention to WorldCat, in hopes of finding additional materials. Once again my search proved rewarding as I ordered books like *Women in the church: a fresh analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* from Interlibrary Loan.

A few days later, I received emails announcing my ILL books were in and I went to pick them up. As I gazed at the books in my hands, my heart dropped as I realized one of the books I ordered was a dissertation, a reminder to always check exactly what type of material I was requesting. While a dissertation can be an excellent source, I was suspicious that the first page read “grade: B.” Luckily, I had plenty of other resources.

Having read through the materials I had gathered, it became clear that my understanding of the verse and scholars' opinion of the verse hinged on how the Greek was used. After looking in a Greek lexicon in the reference section, I sought the help of Dr. Kumpf, my Greek professor. Discussing the Greek with him, he affirmed the ambiguity of the verse, and he offered alternative ways of translating certain words.

By using Galileo, reference materials, ATLA, WorldCat, and by talking with knowledgeable professors, I crafted an essay that describes and argues for the superiority of certain scholarly viewpoints on 1 Timothy 2:15. While my research allowed me to understand the difficulties of the text, it also fueled my desire for greater knowledge as doors to more questions were opened on the views of women and children in the Bible.

