

WHY MIKE WINGER IS WRONG ABOUT AUTHENTEŌ IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:12 – AND WHY IT MATTERS

February 2024, by Andrew Bartlett and Terran Williams

Here's a **QUICK SUMMARY** of our full article, which is at <https://terranwilliams.com/why-mike-winger-is-wrong-about-authenteo-in-1-timothy-212-and-why-it-matters-2/>.

Our full article engages with the 4½ hours of Mike's Women in Ministry Part 12 video in which he discusses the meaning of the rare Greek term *authenteō* in 1 Timothy 2:12. We summarize Mike's reasoning and then assess each step in it.

While Mike's presentation skills are masterful, every step in Mike's reasoning involves a mis-step.

There are many errors and gaps in his research. He has misread what scholars have written. He has missed important points which they have made, not answering them. He has gone off on tangents by asking himself the wrong questions. His reasoning is often unsound and illogical, even self-contradictory. His knowledge of church history is thin. He has got facts wrong.

He has not traced Paul's train of thought through the letter. He has not considered why Paul made the strange choice of using the unusual word *authenteō*. That cries out for an explanation. Mike has not offered one.

We are sad that a well-intentioned and gifted Christian brother teaches publicly with such seeming confidence on topics which he has not thoroughly mastered. The low level of reliability in Mike's output is disappointing, and is apt to mislead many of his listeners.

Mike's conclusion is that in 1 Timothy 2:12 the Greek term should be translated as 'have authority'. He understands it to be referring to a characteristic function of a church elder.

But that is in conflict with the meaning of the term in and around Paul's time.

The available historical evidence shows that in Paul's time, when *authenteō* is used to describe what one person does to another person, it is an appropriate word for describing the application of strong-arm negotiating tactics to overpower another party and force them to back down. And it is an appropriate word for describing the dominating astrological influence of one planet over another. Because astrology was practiced in Ephesus, that rare word would ring a bell with Paul's original audience. It has connotations of pressure and of decisive influence. But it is not an appropriate word for describing the ordinary exercise of authority by a church elder. There is zero evidence which supports such a meaning in Paul's time.

Mike rightly rejects the Church Fathers' traditional view that women cannot be leaders for the reason that they are defective in their nature, being morally weaker and more sinful than men. Yet he urges us to rely on expositions and translations which have been driven by that traditional view. That makes no sense.

Mike has not shown even one historical example, prior to the Church Fathers, of *authenteō* being used or understood in a sense suitable to the function of a church elder. His earliest pertinent evidence to support restrictions on women is from the third-century Father, Origen, in Fragment 74 on 1 Corinthians, which he enthusiastically describes as "*super cool*". Yet, in self-contradiction, Mike himself argues that the view expressed by Origen in that Fragment is definitely wrong – as indeed it is.

Why does it matter how we interpret *authenteō* in 1 Timothy 2:12? Any church or denomination that excludes women from eldership or pastoral leadership on the basis of reading *authenteō* as 'have authority' or 'exercise authority' lacks a sound basis for doing so.