

Message #22**I Timothy 3:11**

Behind every successful church and behind every successful ministry you will find some very quiet, qualified and dignified individuals who are much more impressive and powerful than they appear—they are the godly women. No church will ever become a pillar and support of the truth without godly women. There is no question that a church needs godly men; but just as it needs godly men, it also needs godly women.

WOMEN ENGAGED IN ANY SERVICE MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH ARE TO BE WOMEN WHO HAVE THE CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF BEING FAITHFUL WOMEN OF GOD.

QUESTION #1 – Who are the women being referred to in **verse 11**?

There have been at least four views as to what women Paul had in mind when he wrote **verse 11**:

View #1 - All women of the church.

If the church is to become a pillar and support of the truth of God, it needs godly elders, godly deacons, and godly women.

There is no doubt that Paul has much to say about women in this letter to Timothy. He refers to them in 2:9-15; 5:1-6; and 5:9-16. When he writes II Timothy, Paul directly or indirectly refers to several different types of women—weak women (II Tim. 3:6a); sinful women (II Tim. 3:6b); impulsive women (II Tim. 3:6b); and the spiritually-minded women, who influenced his very life (II Tim. 3:14-15).

It would seem from this that not every woman had the same status or classification in the mind of Paul.

View #2 - The deaconesses of the church.

According to some historians, the early church featured a special category of women known as deaconesses, whose primary responsibility was to work directly with the elders and deacons, specifically in looking into matters pertaining to other women. They were to come to the elders and deacons and report to them concerning the various needs of those they were assigned to care for. Phoebe was classified as a “deacon” or “deaconess” of the church of Cencrea (Rom. 16:1-2).

(Reason #1) - There were deaconesses in the first century. Rom. 16:1

Since qualifications for elders and deacons are presented in this context, it is only logical that the qualifications for a deaconess would also be presented.

(Reason #2) - The grammatical structure favors a deaconess interpretation.

The word “likewise” of **verse 11** is the same word used in verse 8, which clearly begins a new discussion of a new office of leadership.

(Reason #3) - It makes sense for use of the word “women.”

The term “deacon” is a masculine noun. By using the word “women,” Paul clarifies that he is referring here to a special feminine branch of leadership who works under the authority of elders and deacons.

(Reason #4) - It makes sense of the context.

The context is clearly dealing with offices of the church, not with everyone in the church. It stands to reason that the women being discussed here are a special class of women. Of course the real downside of this interpretation is that Paul does not specifically identify another office of the church as deaconess. Furthermore, the word used for Phoebe, in Romans 16:1 is one that may just refer to the fact that she was known as a tremendous servant and minister for God, who attended to the needs of others (G. Abbott- Smith, p. 108). It may not refer at all to a specific office.

View #3 - The wife of the deacon of the church.

(Reason #1) - The obvious and natural interpretation of the context.

The office of deacon is being discussed in verses 8-10, and again in verses 12-13, so the obvious and natural contextual interpretation is their wives are being discussed in **verse 11**.

(Reason #2) - There is no evidence in Scripture where the word “women” is used to denote deaconess .

(Reason #3) - If the apostle had deaconess in mind, he would have clearly stated it and used the word.

(Reason #4) - In the list of qualifications for elders and deacons, Paul has much to say about a man’s family; therefore, he is doing the same thing here.

There is good, strong support for the fact that this is a reference to a deacon’s wife. As one commentator said, “It is a known fact that the wife of a leader, who is a busybody, is one who can destroy her husband’s influence and reputation” (H. A. Ironside, p. 81). The wife of a leader ought to excel other women as being a godly example.

View #4 - Any woman who serves in any leadership capacity in the church.

Although there are not specific offices like elders and deacons, there are many opportunities for women to serve in a variety of leadership capacities and the woman who does is to meet the four qualifications of this verse. In other words, if a woman is to be given a place of responsibility in the church, she must be one who “likewise” meets the qualifications.

(Reason #1) - It allows all words to be taken literally.

(Reason #2) - It explains why there is no specific mention of any office.

(Reason #3) - It explains the “likewise” contextually.

Just as men must meet the qualifications to lead, so women who lead must “likewise” meet the qualifications to be in any leadership role.

QUESTION #2 – What are the qualifications that a woman must meet?

Qualification #1 - She must be dignified. **3:11a**

This is the same word used of a deacon in verse 8. We may recall that the meaning of this word is one that refers to a reverent, grave and serious mind when it comes to the things of God and the things of the church. Women who lead are to be very serious about God, His Word and His church.

Qualification #2 - She must not be a malicious gossip. **3:11b**

The word “malicious gossip” literally means to accuse falsely. It is a title used for the devil himself. When a woman goes around saying things that are false, she is devilish and certainly is not fit to lead anyone or anything.

Qualification #3 - She must be temperate. **3:11c**

This is the same word used for an elder in verse 2. It is a word used in reference to elders (3:2), to women (3:11), and to older men (Titus 2:2). It refers to one who is clear-headed and controlled, not one controlled by sudden impulses. It refers to one sound, sane, sensible, and stable.

Women who are gaining and growing in spirituality will be more and more controlled by sound minds rather than emotions. A woman who has potential for being a powerful woman of God will not be one given to the emotional, irrational or the sensational; but she will be highly focused on the Biblical. She will be a woman in control, not out of control.

Qualification #4 - She must be faithful in all things. **3:11d**

What this specifically means is that a godly woman will be one who is developing in faithfulness in all areas of life. She will be faithful to her home responsibilities and to her husband and children. She will be faithful in her church responsibilities and faithful in her own life. A woman of God will not be continually lax in anything. She will be growing and maturing; she will be stable and faithful.

There are many important applications we may make from this one verse:

- 1) If the church is to become a pillar and support of the truth of God, it needs women.
- 2) If the church is to become a pillar and support of the truth of God, it needs women who will measure up to these qualifications.
- 3) If a man is to be a leader in God's church, he needs a wife that measures up to these qualifications.
- 4) If a woman is to be a leader of others, she must be developing in these character qualities.

The more we move as a pillar and support of the truth of God, the more this church will have godly men and women in conformity with His truth.