

ELDERS, DEACONS, AND THEIR WIVES

Lesson 20

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Wives of Elders and Deacons.

1. Not only must the men seeking to be elders and deacons be qualified, but their wives as well must have the right kind of spiritual character. Often too little attention is given to the wives of elders and deacons.

B. 1 Timothy 3:11.

1. Is the reference in 1 Timothy 3:11 to females, a reference to: a) all the women in the local church, b) the wives of both elders and deacons, c) the wives of deacons, d) women assisting the deacons, or, e) women deacons (deaconess)? Because of the immediate context of 1 Timothy 3:1-13, the approach taken in this lesson views these females as the wives of elders and deacons.
2. Is it women or wives? Grammatically, the Greek word *gunaikas* could go either way, "women" or "wives", depending on the context. Both are used in the various English translations. We will use "wives" in this lesson because of the immediate context of 1 Timothy 3:1-13. The qualifications of male elders and deacons who are "husbands" (v. 2, 12) would naturally lead to a discussion of their "wives".
3. Are there to be women deacons (deaconess) in the local church? No. There is no authority for women deacons. What about Romans 16:1? In some Bible versions, Phoebe is called a "deacon" or "deaconess". It must be kept in mind that *diakonos* in Romans 16:1 means a "servant". Phoebe served in the Lord's church just like all members serve. The words "deacon" or "deaconess" found in some Bible versions in Romans 16:1 is an interpretation, not a translation. Phoebe was a "servant" in a general sense of service, not a "deacon" in the special sense of an appointed position of service.

II. WIVES — THEIR QUALIFICATIONS (1 TIMOTHY 3:11).

A. Grave (see Lesson 19).

B. Not Slanders.

1. Gr. *diabolos*, literally, "to throw over or across"; hence, "slandorous", "accusing falsely", see 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 2:3.
2. A wife must control her tongue, never gossiping, or falsely accusing someone with the intent to harm the reputation of another.

C. Sober (see "vigilant" in Lesson 14).

D. Faithful in All Things.

1. Gr. *pistas en pasin*, "trustworthy, dependable in all things".
2. A wife must be trustworthy and dependable in whatever duty or responsibility she is given by God as a wife and mother, as a Christian, and as a member of a local church.

III. WIVES — THEIR SUPPORT.

A. She Influences Her Husband's Actions.

1. Some wives influence their husbands for worse (Gen. 3; Gen. 27; 1 K. 21; Ac. 5). Some wives influence their husbands for better (1 Sam. 25; Esther 2; Luke 1-2; Ac. 18).

B. She Supports or Hinders Her Husband's Work.

1. The wife of an elder or deacon should work together with her husband and be a support and "help meet" companion regarding his work in the local church (Gen. 2:18).
2. The wife of an elder or deacon is one of full-time service. Therefore, this wife must have the spiritual character that will allow her to: a) not resent her husband's time and energy spent serving others; b) actively participate in her husband's service when needed; and, c) be discrete with her husband's knowledge of local church matters.
3. The wife of an elder or deacon, like all wives, should also consider the principles of marriage discussed elsewhere in the NT (1 Cor. 7:2-3, 10-11, 34; Eph. 5:22-24, 33; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-7; Tit. 2:4-5).

C. She Builds Up or Tears Down Her Husband's Reputation.

1. Depending upon her influence and support, the wife of an elder or deacon could easily build up or tear down her husband's reputation within the local church which in turn would affect how successful his work is.

IV. CONCLUSION: Behind Every Great Elder and Deacon Is a Great Wife.

Lesson Twenty Discussion

1. Who is being discussed in 1 Timothy 3:11? Give the different possibilities and your choice.
2. What does "grave" mean?
3. How is a woman to use her tongue according to 1 Timothy 3:11?
4. What two qualifications of elders are the same for their wives?
5. Give some areas of life in which a woman can be "faithful in all things".
6. Give some examples of how a wife can influence her husband for better or for worse.
7. Give some examples of how a wife can hinder and support her husband's work.
8. Give some examples of how a wife can affect her husband's reputation positively and negatively.
9. The success of a good elder or deacon is due in part to whom?