

Interpreting 1 Timothy 3:11

- 1 Timothy 3:11 (DARBY), The women in like manner grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.
- 1 Timothy 3:11 (YLT), Women—in like manner grave, not false accusers, vigilant, faithful in all things.
- 1 Timothy 3:11 (NASB95 & LSB), Women *must* likewise *be* dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.
- 1 Timothy 3:11 (ESV), *Their* wives likewise *must be* dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.
- 1 Timothy 3:11 (NKJV), Likewise, *their* wives *must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.
- 1 Timothy 3:11 (NA27) γυνακας ὡσαύτως σεμνάς μὴ διαβόλους
 Women likewise dignified not slanderers / malicious gossip
 νηφαλίους πιστᾶς ἐν πᾶσιν
 Temperate, faithful in all

1) Wives (of deacons) ESV, NKJV

PRO

- A) The mention of these women comes in the midst of, not after, the qualifications of deacons. The character of deacon's wives is an integral part of the deacon's qualifications (Cook, p. 777)
- B) The office of deacons involved much more of the lay element and by its nature would involve more assistance from a wife (e.g. in the distribution of alms) (Cook, p. 777)
- C) Cf. CON B below. Overseer's wives cannot participate in their husband's official service the way deacon's wives can (Fairbairn, p. 150).
- D) One part of a deacon's office could be carried out more effectively by deacon's wives (i.e. care of the sick and destitute)
- E) The use of γυναῖκας / gunaikas rather than αἱ διάκονοι / hai diakonoi favors a reference to deacons' wives (Huther, p. 152)

CON

- A) The qualifications contain no reference to domestic duties (Cook, p. 777). There are only those which qualify for confidential ministry (Fairbairn, p. 150).
- B) Wive's qualifications were not given in connection with Overseers (Cook, p. 777; Ellicott, p. 49)
- C) No article or possessive pronoun is found to connect these women with the deacons just described (Fairbairn, p. 150); Ellicott, p. 47). If Paul wanted to make it clear that he was referring to wives of deacons, he could have easily done so by using an article, a possessive pronoun, or the genitive of deacon.
- D) The mention of deacon's domestic responsibilities in vs. 12 make it probable that the women's domestic duties would have been mentioned if these were deacon's wives (Ellicott, p. 48).
- E) Cf. PRO A above. If the character of a deacon's wife is integral to a deacon's qualifications, the character of an overseer's wife would also have to be integral to his qualifications especially since counseling is part of teaching. Since an overseer is also an elder, he and his wife will generally be older with his wife involved in teaching younger women (Titus 2:3-5).
- F) Cf. PRO A above. Since the qualifications occur in the midst of the qualifications of a deacon, it designates those who *likewise* have an office of ministry as do deacons with specific qualifications set out for them.
- G) Cf. PRO B, C, D above. Acts 6 is often referred to as evidence of Deacons handling "lay" and "domestic" responsibilities, but the seven men chosen were charged with carrying out a specific responsibility of "table waiting" on behalf of the apostles. This only sets a precedence for those who would later have an office of Deacon to carry out tasks as assigned on behalf of the Elders. There are no restrictions in Acts 6 on what either Deacons or Elders

can do. Philip was an evangelist (Acts 8; 21:8), and Stephen was a teacher / apologist (Acts 6:8-7:60). Pastors / teachers (Eph. 4:10-11) have a primary responsibility in preaching, teaching and prayer, but they also equip the saints for the work of ministry in many areas while counseling, carrying for the sick and dying (James 5). The Pastor's wife, especially in a small church, is often involved in helping him these later responsibilities as well carrying out her own ministries in the church.

H) Cf. PRO E above. Using a feminine article with a plural of a masculine noun, deacon (οἱ διάκονοι / hai diakonoi) would have caused confusion, not clarity. See CON C above.

2) A Female Deacon responsible to assist in ministry

PRO

- A) Paul would hardly omit an order which, in the case of Phobe in Romans 16:1, appears to have existed at Cenchrea (Cook., p. 777). Cf. CON A & C below Paul specifically commends her as a διάκονον / diakonon when he could have easily commended here simply as someone who serves (διακονία / diakonia or verb form) in the church.
- B) "Likewise" (ὡσαύτως / hōsautōs) in 3:11 was also used in 3:8 to introduce a new office.
- C) The same verb (δεῖ / dei - *must be*) used in 3:2 governs here in 3:11 as in 3:8
- D) This is the same grammatical construction used for transitions to new groups in 2:9 and in Titus 2:3, 6 (Fairbairn, p. 150)
- E) There is a parallelism of qualifications between v. 8 and v. 11 (Ellicott, p. 47; Lock, p. 40)
- F) Cf. CON E below. These changes are consistent with the ways women's roles differ from men's (Ellicott, pg. 47)
- G. Instructions throughout this section are guidelines for qualification for office, not exhortations to govern lifestyle (Huther, p. 152)
- H. Cf. CON D below. One could hold that Paul was already speaking of deaconesses before limiting his remarks to male deacons beginning in vs. 12 (Dibelius - Conzelmann, p. 58).
- I. Cf. CON D below. The listing of qualities within the deaconess' list could indicate another office closely related to that of a deacon (διάκονον / diakonon)
- J. Cf. CON B below. A catalogue of widows eligible to be supported by the church is irrelevant to a separate office of females who minister that are not necessarily widows
- K. Cf. CON F below. Since there are no qualifications set for an Overseer's wife, it is difficult to reason that there must be qualifications set for a Deacon's wife. An ungodly Overseer's wife can do much more damage to the church ministry than an ungodly Deacon's wife.

CON

- A) Evidence for existence of such an office at this early date is far from clear (Cook, p. 777).
- B) A class of female ministers is indicated by the Catalogue of Widows in 5:9. Another order of female ministers here is unnecessary (Cook, p. 777)
- C) Cf. PRO A above. Romans 16:1 can be taken in a more general sense to mean Phobe was "a servant" or "an assistant" (Hendrikson, p. 133)
- D) Cf. PRO B & C above. Even though there is structural similarity to the other lists, there is also dissimilarity in that the present list is "parenthesized" within the list for deacons, indicating that they are "deacon's assistants" (Hendricksen, p. 133).
- E) Cf. PRO E above. There is a change from "not double tongued" to "malicious gossip" and from "not fond of sordid gain" to "faithful in all things"
- F) Cf. PRO G above. These are not guides to lifestyle, but qualifications of deacons as to the kinds of wives they have.

To these arguments I will emphasize two very practical problems. The text only allows for this to be either wives of deacons or a female counterpart to Deacons - a Deaconess. If this is taken as deacon's wives.

- 1) A man cannot be a deacon unless his wife meets these qualifications.
- 2) Unless a woman is married to a man who is currently a deacon, she is excluded from this ministry even if she meets the other qualifications.

Consider if that standard was applied in our own church. Who would remain qualified as deacons?

Who would be qualified to continue on the Women's Servant Council? Is Paul seeking to limit ministry to that degree or only ensure that those in such church positions of ministry meet some basic standards of godliness?

No verb in this verse 11 or verse 8 . Verb is supplied from 3:2

1) What are the legitimate exegetical possibilities?

Women (in general without reference to Deacons)

women of deacons (hence "Deacon's wives." Reference to deacon being supplied from vs. 8 female deacons with reference to this being an office of service likewise to deacons stated in verses 8 & 12

2) What is the range of meaning of the key word(s) in question?

Greek = γυναῖκας, gunaikas (from γυνή, gunē) = adult female of marriageable age - woman.

Translated as wife when used with a genitive or in direct reference to a husband / marriage

Formula is "woman of _____" Pronoun or specific name

Context determines if there is a marriage reference (1 Cor. 7)

3) What is the context of this verse? Does / how does the suggested interpretation fit it?

This uses the same sentence form as for deacons in verse 8 - *likewise . . . listing of qualifications*. It is sandwiched in between two references to Deacons.

Could Paul have made it clear he was referring to a deacon's wife if he wanted to do so? Yes.

Use the genitive noun for deacon - γυναῖκας τοῦ διακονῶν, gunaikao tou diakonōn - women of the deacons

Could Paul have made it clear these women were "deaconesses" by calling them that? No. There is no feminine form of deacon, so using a masculine form as in Romans 16:1 would have created confusion.

4) What is the flow of the author's point / argument in this verse? Does / how does the suggested interpretation fit it?

Character qualifications of Overseers, vs. 1-7 *must be*

Character qualifications of Deacons, vs. 8-10 *likewise*

Character qualifications of women, vs. 11 *likewise*

Domestic qualifications of Deacons, vs. 12 *must be*

Reward - vs. 13

5) What insights are gained from cross references / parallel passage of same topic?

Romans 16:1 - Phoebe is directly labeled as a δῖακονον / diakonon

Verses mentioning females that labored in various ministries (see Romans 16:3, 6, 12).

6) What are the ramifications of the various suggested interpretations? Does / how does the suggested interpretation fit into the context & flow of the author's point when considering the ramifications?

If wives of deacons . . . These are additional qualifications for the Deacon. Wife serves alongside her husband. Not an office of service within the church. This places additional restrictions on the deacons, but without mention of any restrictions on character qualities of an Overseer's wife. This does not fit well Paul's purpose in finding qualified people for positions of leadership and service. This eliminates those whose own character does meet the

qualifications due to spouse's lack - restricting both otherwise qualified men and women from service.

If women in general . . . Doesn't fit. These are specific qualifications for specific women, not a general call to all women to have these qualities. The flow of the passage (as above) does not allow for this to be a general call / demand to all women

If women who serve in same capacity as Deacons . . . they are simply female deacons charged with service to the church as directed by the Overseers / Elders. This fits the flow of the text as an additional office of service. It fits Paul's purpose in finding additional people to lead / serve while restricting it to those with qualified character.