



Course Name: Shepherds/Elders (Wives)

By Tommy South

Course description:

We often spend much time discussing the role and responsibilities of shepherds within the Lord's church. However, we rarely, if ever, consider the shepherd's wife. How important is her role in relationship to her husband and the success of fulfilling his responsibilities? In this lesson, you will discuss the importance of the shepherd's wife, what qualities she needs to possess, and how to support her in this role.

Course Objectives: By the end of this class students will have...

- A. Examined the role a shepherd's wife has in the church.
- B. Considered qualities needed for a shepherd's wife and how to support her.
- C. Reflected on ways to encourage younger women to prepare themselves to serve in this capacity and how they can encourage their husbands to serve in this role.

Outline of the class:

- A. During the first few minutes of the class divide the class into groups of three or four. Then ask each table to take 15-20 minutes to discuss the following.
 1. Describe the qualities you believe an elder's wife should have in relationship to his role as an elder.
 2. How should the congregation approach the relationship of the wife in the shepherd's role?
 3. What is the main role or responsibility of a shepherd's wife?
- B. Are there "qualifications" for a shepherd's wife, just as for shepherds? Since shepherds are required to be married (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6), this is an important question.
 1. 1 Timothy 3:11 – "Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things."
 2. Literally, "the women." In the Greek language, "woman" and "wife" are the same word (Compare 1 Timothy 2:9-12, for example). The context determines which is intended. So, which is it in 1 Timothy 3:11?
 3. There are three (3) possibilities:
 - a. "Wives" are wives of the deacons since the verses before and following verse 11 are specifically about deacons (If so, why are there no corresponding qualifications for elders' wives?).

- b. “Wives” are those of both elders and deacons (If so, why are they placed in the context of the discussion of deacons and not of elders, or after both?).
- c. “The Women” refers to female servants, counterparts to deacons. All women who serve the church in some leading capacity (teaching, benevolence, women’s ministry, visitation, etc.).

*Note: Any of the three possibilities would suggest that shepherds’ wives need to be “qualified” in some sense. If so for deacons’ wives, why not for those of elders? If so for “women who serve” generally, would that not include elders’ wives?

*See also Titus 2:3-5, which applies to *all* “older women.”

C. What is the specific intent of these qualifications, and why would each be important for a shepherd’s wife?

- 1. “Dignified” _____.
(NIV – “worthy of respect”)
- 2. “Not slanderers” _____.
(NIV – “not malicious talkers”)
- 3. “Sober-minded” _____.
(NIV – “temperate”)
- 4. “Faithful in all things” _____.
(NIV – “trustworthy in everything”)

D. What qualities are not mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:11 that would also be especially important for a shepherd’s wife?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

E. What do you think...?

- 1. How important is the shepherd’s wife to the effectiveness of his ministry as a shepherd? Why?

- 2. Should we expect shepherds’ wives to have specific responsibilities in the same way that their husbands do? If so, what are they?

3. What specific burdens might be borne by a shepherd's wife?
4. What can the church do to be supportive of the shepherds' wives?
5. How can we encourage young women to aspire to become shepherds' wives?

Conclusion:

- A. There is no doubt that the wife of a shepherd plays a critical role in the work and service of her husband.
- B. Not only should congregations take into consideration the burden placed on the shepherd's wife, but they must also find ways to be supportive of her and the role she plays in the relationship.
- C. Reflect on the discussion in this lesson and consider how the church can provide the needed support, and to encourage the younger women to prepare and look for ways they can help their husbands become elders and fulfill this needed role within the church.