

Ladies Home Journey

Role Call for Older Women

Created and played by Dana Carvey on *Saturday Night Live*, The Church Lady is an elderly woman named “Enid Strict” who is the uptight, smug and pious host of her own talk show, Church Chat. The Church Lady is known for always wearing a purple dress, a sweater, visible knee-high stockings, and a pair of cat’s-eye horn rimmed glasses. She was known for the catchphrases “Well, isn’t that SPE-CIAL?!” “How con-VEEN-ient!,” and “Could it be... SATAN?”

Carvey said he based the character on women he knew from his church growing up who would keep track of his and others' attendance.

There *are* ladies in churches that are like Enid Strict. And then there are the true church ladies whose lives are presented in God’s Word. They are the “older women” you read about in Titus.

Titus 2:3 the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things -

First let’s talk about what it really means to be an “older” woman. Almost as soon as someone says the word “older” in describing these ladies they add something like, “Older doesn’t mean just older in age, it also means ‘older’ in maturity.” Thus they quickly justify a woman of almost any age being put in a position of leading and teaching other women.

It’s clear from this text in Titus that the “older women” were, in fact, older in physical age. Look at the context of the verses in Titus. These ladies had lots of practical experience that can only come with age. The things the older women were to teach and example demanded that they have some track record in actually doing them.

- You can’t teach younger women to “love their husbands” unless you have loved your husband *for some length of time*.
- You can’t teach younger women to “love their children” until you have loved and raised kids *for quite a while* (if not all the way to adulthood).
- **All** the qualities listed in Titus 3:5 demand that the older woman have a solid, established track record *over a rather lengthy period of time*.

We're going to see, in fact, that the way older women teach younger women is mostly by example which requires them to have accomplished these things, not just to assent to them theoretically.

Another unusual fact in churches is that when women do teach other women they rarely follow the curriculum suggested by Paul in these verses. There are not too many women's studies that concentrate on the domestic priorities that seem so abundantly clear in these verses. Something like *Apples of Gold* is the exception, not the norm, and I think Scripture would have it the other way around.

There's nothing wrong with ladies getting together to study the Bible verse-by-verse. But neither is there anything wrong with older women teaching younger women about their domestic responsibilities. You have to at least ask yourself why the majority of women's Bible studies are ignoring this emphasis.

Younger women can (and should) be spiritually mature. Older women can (but should not) be spiritually immature. The point Paul was making is that a mature younger woman will follow the teaching in these verses right into being a mature older woman who has something full of grace to share with the next generation.

What is the most important characteristic of these older women? Paul begins by saying that the older women he had in mind were "reverent in behavior."

"Reverent" means *acting like a priestess*. "In demeanor [older women] are to be what would be fitting for temple service" (Gordon Fee).

While there were no Jewish priestesses, the ladies would have understood the word to mean they should act at all times as if they were in the Temple serving the Lord. At home... In the market... In the church... Wherever she finds herself, the older woman has the demeanor of a person who is serving the Lord and all those locations are where she serves.

"Not slanderers." This seems obvious. What isn't so obvious is the way both men and women slander others by putting it in a spiritual context, like by asking you to pray about so-and-so. Or by asking your counsel or advice about a situation when really they just want to say something bad about another person.

"Not given to much wine," and I'd add my personal opinion, not given to drinking *at all!* The Bible gives you the liberty to drink alcohol but it does so with lots of warnings.

For example, it is sin to be drunk. At what point, though, are you drunk? Where is that boundary so that you don't cross it?

Norman Geisler argues pretty successfully that all “strong drink” is condemned in the Bible and that even our wines and beers would be considered “strong” by biblical standards.

Be careful with “wine,” with your liberty to drink alcohol. Not much that is good comes out of the bottle.

We can expand the exhortation about “wine” to other substances that alter consciousness. Our society is infatuated with pills and prescriptions. If you have a documented medical condition, and there is medication that can help you, great. Just be careful.

The last word in verse three brings us to the role of the older woman. “Teachers of good things” is a single compound word in the Greek language. It appears only here in the Bible. It implies informal teaching by word and example since the content of the instruction has to do with being a godly wife and mother.

Look at verses four and five.

Titus 2:4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, Titus 2:5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

The word translated “admonish” (“train” in other translations) literally means *to bring someone to their senses*. It would seem to imply that the younger women are wavering in their calling.

Here is how I see this in practice. The world continues to exert pressure on young woman to abandon their biblical domestic roles as wives and mothers. They need to be brought to their senses by godly, older women who have stayed the course and fulfilled that God-given role.

Ah, now this whole context is starting to make more sense! The world will always seek to destroy the family. One way it will do so is to suggest to younger women that they throw-off their traditional roles, as defined in the Bible, as wives and moms. This thinking will even creep into the church in the form of the ordination of women to the roles God has reserved for men.

The champion of God’s cause, the person called upon to stand in the gap against these home-wrecking trends, is the godly older woman who has fulfilled her roles of wife and mother as unto the Lord. She stands as an example by which those younger gals who are spiritual will be admonished to come to their senses and fulfill their high calling.

There are a few role models in the Bible although, in most cases, not too much is written about them.

Timothy's mom and grandmother were godly older women. Lois and Eunice, are mentioned only once in the Bible (Second Timothy 1:5). Not much is said about them but that which is recorded tells their story. Acts 16:1 tells us that Timothy's mother was a Jew and a believer but his father was a Greek. His father would have known little about God but Timothy received training through his mother and grandmother. We are told that Timothy had been taught the Holy Scriptures since he was an infant. He had been fully prepared for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the best role model of the older woman would be Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias the priest and the mother of John the Baptist. We see her taking the role of the older woman we've presented in her counseling Mary, the mother of Jesus.

She and her husband "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6).

Elizabeth's situation was a little different than most older women in that she was barren even though she was "advanced in years" (Luke 1:7).

When Mary was told she was with child by the Holy Ghost, she went to her cousin Elizabeth. By that time Elizabeth was with child. The Scriptures record their encounter.

Luke 1:39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah,

Luke 1:40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

Luke 1:41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

Luke 1:43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

Luke 1:44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

Luke 1:45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

Notice Elizabeth's encouragement to Mary in verse forty-five. She told Mary she was right to "believe" God, to take Him at His Word, and that God would fulfill His promises to her. She was to joyfully accept her role as Joseph's wife and the mother of Jesus.

She did what any good older woman ought to do, then or today, as a role model to the younger women. She exhorted Mary to stay the course, to fulfill her role and responsibilities.

Go and do likewise!

