

Safeguarding Women, Protecting Pastors

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Introduction:

- What I am saying:
- What I am not saying:

Elders in the church should encourage women to get training in biblical counseling for a number of reasons.

For the Kingdom's Sake

- Mature women are commanded to wisely train younger women.
 - “Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.” Titus 2:2-5
- Inferences from Titus 2:3-5
 - “No one, not even Titus, is better able to train a young woman than an experienced older woman.” (William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary of the Pastoral Epistles*)
 - There were (and are) mature women (reverent, devout, temperate servants) who had gifts and experiences that qualified them to wisely counsel and train other women.
 - Since there are both gender specific and non-specific categories listed in these verses, women are commanded to teach one another in every area of life:
 - Gender-specific categories: how to love and submit to their husbands, homemaking skills.
 - Non-specific categories: right living, having a sound mind, sober-mindedness, kindness, loving their children.
- The ministry of women helping women should not be limited to “home economics” alone, but should also include training in godliness in all areas. Spiritually mature women can help other women in every area of life. Titus 2 is not meant to limit a woman's

one-on-one ministry but rather to be an example of the many areas that women can serve each other.

- The Word of God is “exposed to reproach” when women fail to take up this calling in at least two areas:
 - When Christian women are untrained, ungodly and unrestrained, demonstrating a need for a strong theological foundation and a practical working out of the implications of Christian womanhood.
 - When pastors and female counselees get involved in ungodly relationships.
- Mature women have an advantage over mature men in the training of young women because
 - A mature woman who has identified and confronted her own sin can understand the gender-specific dynamics of another woman’s sin.
 - The Standard is always God’s Word.
 - The Situation and Application of the Word is unique.
 - The difference between a shotgun and a scapel. Both work – one is more on point and specific.
- Mature women have an advantage over mature men in the training of young women because
 - A woman is best at helping another woman know how to subordinate herself to her husband.
 - A woman understands physiological differences that men may be uncomfortable with or uninformed about.

Peter taught women (publicly) to follow the example of another woman, Sarah, in learning to be submissive, godly and courageous (1 Peter 3:1f). Younger women should have before them living examples of women who model godly behavior.

For Our Pastors and Male Counselor’s Sake

- Protection – All Christians (men and women) are commanded to flee from the potential of sexual sin, not stay and try to resist it (2 Timothy 2:22).
- Improper Bonding – The nature of counseling is to “bond” with another – to open one’s heart, to share intimate details of personal struggles. (Some men may equate protection with sexual intimacy.)

- For the counselor's wife's sake
- Following the biblical example: There is no example of long-term one-on-one cross-gender counseling anywhere in Scripture. For a woman to have spent intimate time with the disciples (or Christ Himself) would have been shameful and unheard of. Jesus chose males for friends. Although He did have friends who followed with him and whom he encouraged in this, we have no record of women in long term private sharing times.
- What is the most loving, wise course of action?

For the Counselee's Sake

- Wives who may already be struggling in their marriage do not need to bond with another more understanding man.
- Marital problems may be exacerbated by cross-gender counseling.

“Cross-gender counseling might be a biblical option, but only in limited circumstances. It is, however, particularly unwise when it involves long-term counseling. Individual counseling for marriage problems, for concerns of singles, or for divorce issues are situations in which long-term cross-gender counseling has significant potential to create difficulties. A counselor is unfair, unwise, and unloving to proceed with a counseling case in which he/she is not experiencing difficulty with sinful attraction, but *the counselee might be.*”

Carol Cornish, “Women Helping Women”

How can you encourage women in your congregation to hear and fulfill God's call to help other women?

- Teach them to rely on the Holy Spirit's gifting and that they don't have to have an answer for everything. Teach them to use what they have!
- Encourage them, by God's grace, to seek to become women who are reverent, devout, self-controlled who doesn't gossip, grounded both in the depths of theology and the practical out working of the great truths of Scripture.
- Encourage them to pray for wisdom as they walk through the difficulties of life on this sin-cursed, yet partially redeemed planet.

- Appoint a mature woman to form a study group with women in the church and work through theological books together.
- Make a way for them to take courses and attend seminars. This means making their training and support a line item on the budget. Among Evangelical Protestant churches, women make up the majority (55%)ⁱ. Among those seeking counseling, women make up a far greater majority. Therefore, it would be to your congregation's advantage to train women to care for other women.
- Become IBCD/ACBC certified. Find a friend or mentor who will go through the reading and tests with you.

ⁱ <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/gender-composition/>