

THE HOME AS THE HEART OF A WOMAN'S MINISTRY

TITUS 2:3–5

INTRODUCTION

Ladies, today my aim is to help you **understand and embrace God's plan** for your ministry to both **your family and your church**.

Since it's God's plan, **it is a good plan, and it is the best plan**.

It is a beautiful plan—one filled with **value and dignity** for those who embrace it.

It is different from the plan God has for men—it **complements** the ministry God has given to men and it **completes** God's plan for the family, church, and society.

That's another way of saying that it is a plan that God has **perfectly and uniquely tailored** to you as a woman, according to **His good and infinitely wise plan**.

An important implication of recognising that this is God's plan according to His unique design for women is that you are **guaranteed to find what you long for most out of life**—guaranteed to find the most our of family and church—by embracing God's plan.

Your deepest longings will be fulfilled, your greatest joys will be found, **by submitting to God's plan**—not resisting it.

Here's the main point/ big idea—the home is the centre of your ministry to your family and your church.

To say that differently, **the home (yours and others) is the heart of a woman's ministry.**

As you'll see today, a woman's ministry to her family and her church **overlap in the home**, which means that you are often presented with (and pressured by!) **a false choice** between serving your family and serving your church.

Overlapping in the home, much of a woman's ministry to her family IS her ministry to the church.

In order to help you **understand and embrace God's plan** for your ministry, I want to spend most of our time in **Titus 2:3–5** and then **illustrate it with three examples** of women in the NT who embraced God's plan.

Turn to **Titus 2.**

For the sake of context, it's critical that we take note of **verse 1**—**it points us back to chapter one and then forward to chapter two.**

Back in **1:5–16**, Paul described **God's plan for church leadership.**

It is an **unapologetically masculine plan**—God's plan is for men to lead the church, at every level.

Particularly, **men qualified in character and skill** known as elders.

That leadership is **expressed primarily in two activities**:

1. **Teaching**
2. **Exercising authority** (decisions)

Later in **chapter two**, we'll see that this is **replicated in the family**—God's plan is for men to lead their families, primarily in two activities:

1. **Teaching**
2. **Exercising authority** (decisions)

Taking note of this allows us, already, to make **two clarifications** which will become even clearer and more convincing as we work through the text of **Titus 2:3–5**—

1. A woman's ministry in the family/ church is not one of **exercising authority**—God has given that to men.

Even a mother's authority over her children is subordinate to, and an expression for, her husband's authority as leader of the family.

2. A woman's ministry in the family/ church is not one of **formal teaching/ doctrinal instruction**.

God has, again, given that to men.

Titus 2 calls on women to help/ encourage one another to **APPLY** the doctrine that is taught by their **elders** (church) and **husband** (family).

God's plan is not for women to take the role of **formal, doctrinal teachers** of one another.

Look at **verse 1** to see what I mean—

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.

Titus, as the pastor/ elder, is the one entrusted with the ministry of teaching **doctrine** and the **principles/ practical implications** that accord with sound doctrine.

Within the church, he's also the one who exercises authority by **commanding obedience** and **correcting disobedience** as the shepherd of the flock.

Within the family, the husband has the same.

Titus the pastor/ elder, not the older women, is the one who, in God's plan for the church, is **the one responsible to teach doctrine and authoritatively shepherd.**

Now that's important to note because, very often, the women's ministry of the church **operates more like a parachurch ministry**:

- The leaders are **not subject to the authority/ oversight of the elders.**

They follow their own plan/ vision/ preferences.

- The teaching of a women's ministry is **misunderstood to be God's primary/ most effective means of grace** to women.

As if the women of the church grow more effectively through the teaching of other women.

- You see this often when a woman wants to study a subject and then looks for **a talk or a book from a woman**, instead of just finding the best sermon or book even if it's written by a man.
- Sometimes it operates like a **“church within a church,”** with the leaders/ teachers ministering more like elders responsible to shepherd the women of the church.
- **This is not God's plan.**

Instead, as you see in **verse 1**, God's plan is for elders to teach doctrine and the principles/ implications for practical application.

What, then, is the plan described in **Titus 2:3-5**?

How does the ministry of women to one another **fit into God's plan for the church and family**?

God's plan, as described in **Titus 2**, is that of **counsel and encouragement in obedience**.

As you'll see, the **emphasis is not on teaching doctrine** as if women can only be effectively taught by other women.

Rather, the **emphasis is one helping one another** with the **practical application** of what is taught in the church by **elders** and in the home by **husbands**.

Even though we are considering God's plan for your ministry within the church, there is **significant overlap with your ministry within your family** so that it is **hard to separate** the two.

However, you will see that in both cases, **the home is the heart of a woman's ministry**—even if you are single or married without children, or if your children are grown and have families of their own.

Now as you look at **verses 3–5**, you can see that Paul **divides his instruction** between **older** and **younger women**.

Here the term “**older women**” refers primarily to those **past their child-rearing years**.

A woman in her 60s or older has rich experience in caring for her family and her church and so she has **the wisdom of experience** by which to help and encourage younger women who are **still learning** to love their husbands and their children.

However, it's helpful for us to **consider the older/ younger divide** in terms of **stages of life**:

- Every woman who is in the **next stage or beyond** can be a Titus 2 mentor.

With that in mind, look at **verse 3**.

Without wanting to spend all our time on the details, you can see that Paul **does NOT allow EVERY older woman** to mentor younger women.

Apart from their age and experience, there are **two essential qualifications** for a woman to minister within the church as a Titus 2 mentor.

First, she must be a **good example in her lifestyle**.

Second, she must be a **good influence in her words**.

Let me show you.

In **verse 3**, Paul says that, **first**, a Titus 2 mentor must be a **good example in her lifestyle** when he says—

Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behaviour, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine...

The **positive description** is that a woman be “**reverent**,” a word which has the **root meaning of being priestlike** and came to refer to that which is **appropriate to holiness**.¹

Simply put, older women are to be **godly examples of holiness**.

The **negative description** points to the **ungodly behaviour** of those whose lives were not focussed on pleasing the Lord in holiness.

Without responsibilities in caring for children, many older women would **fill their time with gossip and alcohol**.

Some things never change!

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Titus*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 77

You can see quite clearly, though, that Paul **using positive and negative descriptions** to say that a Titus 2 mentor must be a woman who is **a good example in her lifestyle**.

If you turn to **1 Timothy 5**, we'll find a beautiful description of **what this looks like** in the context of both her ministry to her family and her church.

In **verses 9–10** we read—

**⁹ A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man,
¹⁰ having a reputation for good works; if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in affliction, if she has devoted herself to every good work.**

If you look down at **verse 16**, we can see **one more example** of ministry that such a godly older woman would have given herself to—

If any believing woman has widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

So in sum, **Paul paints a picture** of a Titus 2 mentor must be a woman who is a **good example in her lifestyle**, particularly as she has **served both family and church by:**

- Being a faithful wife to her husband
- Helping her husband
- Caring for her children
- Discipling her children
- Caring for her/ her husband's aged parents
- Caring for her fellow brothers and sisters in the church

As you can easily understand, her ministry to both her family and her church (with the obvious overlap between the two), **centres on the home.**

There home is where she faithfully served her husband, her children, her parents, and her fellow church members.

A woman who has a proven track record of living with such a godly example is **exactly the kind of older woman** who is qualified to mentor younger women because she is a good example in her lifestyle.

As you turn back to **Titus 2:3**, you can see that the **second qualification** is that she must be **a good influence in her words.**

That is what Paul means when he writes—
... teaching what is good...

You see, she is **not primarily teaching doctrine**, or else Paul would have said, as with Titus, that she is teaching sound doctrine.

Rather, **she teaches what is good**, which in the context refers to **living life and doing ministry God's way.**

She teaches the good of loving one's husband and loving one's children, and serving one's fellow church members.

You see, even a woman who lives an exemplary lifestyle can be **DISQUALIFIED from a Titus 2 mentor ministry** because she **uses her words to influence** those around her to rebel against God's plan for the family and the church.

The easiest form this take is **grumbling and complaining**.

Regardless of how well you've lived your life, you cannot help a younger woman to live the way God wants her to if you spend your time complaining to her about how terrible your husband is, how difficult your children can make life, even as adults, and how you think the pastor simply doesn't know what he's talking about.

So what Paul calls for, then, is a woman who **instead uses her influence over other women for good**—she uses her words to **encourage obedience and faithfulness**, not rebellion and unfaithfulness.

So a Titus 2 mentor must be **a good influence in her words**.

That kind of an older women, one who is qualified through both her good example in her lifestyle and her good influence in her words, is then **qualified and equipped to mentor younger women**.

Look at **verse 4**—

so that they may instruct the young women in sensibility...

The Greek word here, translated as “**instruct... in sensibility**,” means specifically to **instruct in behaviour that is becoming and shows good judgment**.²

² BDAG, σωφροσύνη.

It means **to encourage or advise**, and therefore refers to **mentoring that involves private rather than public instruction**.³

In other words, the best way to capture what Paul is commending as the ministry of women to one another within the church is the **idea of mentorship**.

Paul is describing God's plan for women in the church to **both mentor and be mentored by others**—not primarily as a means of teaching doctrine, but as a means of **aiding and encouraging application of doctrine**.

Before we consider the specifics of what Paul expects older women to mentor younger women in, I'd like to offer **two clarifications**.

First, it is not wrong for a woman to teach another woman doctrine.

The only prohibition in the NT is against **women teaching men**.

1 Timothy 2:12—

But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

So it is not wrong for a women to teach other women doctrine within the context of their ministry.

³ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 332.

That is an important clarification because even when the focus is on practical application, it is almost impossible to counsel another in practical application **without some degree of instruction in doctrine.**

However, God's plan is not for this to be the **primary way** in which a woman is taught doctrine.

God's plan is for women to be **taught primarily by men**—the elders of their church and their husbands.

Women should then **mentor one another**, or **counsel and encourage one another**, in how to **conform to the doctrine** they are learning in the contexts of church and family.

Second, Titus 2 is **NOT describing** an **exclusive relationship** between **ONE** older woman and **ONE** younger woman.

Among those who rightly understand God's plan to be mentorship between the women of the church, many **misapply this by selecting only one** older woman to mentor them.

As you can see in the text, though, Paul is **describing the body life of the church** as the members serve one another.

God's plan is for the **plurality of older women (those qualified)** to disciple or mentor the **plurality of younger women** so that you are being counselled and encouraged by many women.

Positively, this means that you'll have the **wisdom of a multitude of counsellors** and will be able to glean the best from the strengths of the various women in church.

Some women have **more experience in areas** that others have little or none.

For example, there may be an older woman who has raised a disabled child and she will be best suited to mentor a young mom facing the same challenge.

At the same time, that older woman may never have faced the financial strain that the young mom faces and so she may go to another woman in the church who has excelled in living thriftily off her husband's limited income.

Perhaps there is yet another older woman in the church who faced years of heartache from a difficult relationship with her mother and so she will be best suited to counsel the young mom in how to have a godly response to her mother while facing the challenges of raising a disabled child while under financial pressure.

Negatively, having multiple older women to mentor younger women guards against the **danger of a pseudo-authority** that is **not part of God's plan**.

God has given a husband as the authority over a woman's family and elders as the authority over a woman's church, but sometimes when Titus 2 is **overemphasised**, the mentor can take on a greater influence in the life of the younger woman than God intends.

She becomes a **spiritual authority** whose **counsel outweighs** that of her husband or her elders.

With those **two clarifications** in mind, let's turn to **verses 4–5** as we see the **specifics of God's plan of mentorship** between women in the church.

⁴ **so that they may instruct the young women in sensibility: to love their husbands, to love their children,**
⁵ **to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be slandered.**

Once again, we could spend all of our time considering the details of what Paul is describing here, but let's **keep it simple** so that we can look at some examples of God's plan for ministry within the family and church.

Much of what a younger woman needs to do, assuming of course that **she is married (since that is the norm)**, is to love her husband and love her children.

Notice, though, that this is something that **doesn't come naturally** but something a woman **needs to learn to do**.

A woman needs to be **trained to love her husband and children**, because they certainly don't always make it easy.

A woman needs to be **mentored in the challenges she faces** from being a sinner herself and then being called to serve other sinners, all while facing the challenging circumstances of a sin-cursed world.

That is not easy!

Now as you can see, Paul says that a younger woman also needs to learn to **make the home the heart of her ministry.**

That's what he means when he says she is a “**worker at home.**”

Home is where she serves both her family and her church, applying the doctrine she learns **within that context** and **helping others do the same.**

Home is where a wife **establishes her domain**, like the **Proverbs 31 wife**, so that the more capably and competently she runs her home, **the more her husband is helped and freed** to fulfil what God has called him to do as a leader in the family, workplace, church, and society at large.

Home is where a mother **disciples her young children**, teaching them what they need not only to succeed in life, but also **how to live life God's way.**

Home is where a woman **cares for her aging parents**, showing the love for her parents and parents-in-law that was once show to her and her husband when they were children.

Home is where a woman **demonstrates hospitality**, caring for the needs of her fellow church members and enabling much of the ministry of the church to happen in her home.

If she is mentored well, then she will mature into the ministry to both family and church that her mentors exemplified in **1 Timothy 5: 9–10**—

9 A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, 10 having a reputation for good works; if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in affliction, if she has devoted herself to every good work.

If you look at **Titus 2:5**, there is a warning about failing to follow God's plan—the word of God will be slandered if women do not follow God's plan for serving their family and church, with their home as the heart of their ministry.

To be blunt, those who rebel against God's plan because they have bought into the worldly "wisdom" of feminism bring dishonour to both God and His message of salvation.

Now, while I would love to spend more time digging into the nerdy details of the text, I think it would be more helpful to you to look at **three examples of women in the NT** who exemplify what it is to have their home at the heart of their ministry both to their family and their church.

These three examples are then what an older woman should be and what a younger women should learn to be, following God's plan of mentorship as women help one another figure out how to serve in such faithful and sacrificial ways.

1. Lydia

Acts 16:13-15

¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and sitting down, we began speaking to the women who had assembled.

¹⁴ And a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening, whose heart the Lord opened to pay attention to the things spoken by Paul.

¹⁵ And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Acts 16:40

And they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brothers, they encouraged them and left.

Lydia opened **both her heart and her home** to the church.

As she sought to serve the church, the context in which she did it was her home.

2. Phoebe

Romans 16:1-2

¹ **Now I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea;**
² **that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a benefactor of many, and of myself as well.**

Some translations—“**deaconess.**”

1 Timothy 3:11

Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.

The inclusion of *γυναίκα* in **1 Timothy 3:11** provides qualifications for the wives of deacons since Paul anticipates that **deacons' wives would support and assist their husbands in their roles**, just as sometimes happened in public society.⁴

Notice that there is **no mention of Phoebe's husband or family**, and while it's certainly possible that she was married, it seems **more likely that she was unmarried.**

She is then a great example of a woman who wholeheartedly serves the church, and yet still makes the home the heart of her ministry.

⁴ Darryl Burling, “Women and the Office of Deacons,” Biblical Mastery Academy, accessed June 18, 2025, <https://biblicalmastery.academy/>.

Even if you are not wealthy enough to be a benefactor to the church, you can still serve the other women of the church by **helping them excel in their ministry at home.**

3. Prisca

Acts 18:1-3

¹ **After these things he departed Athens and went to Corinth.**

² **And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, and his wife Priscilla, who recently came from Italy because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. He came to them,**

³ **and because he was of the same trade, he was staying with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.**

Paul lived and ministered in **Corinth for eighteen months.**

There his **first host and hostess** were Aquila and Priscilla—**“staying with them”** (Acts 18:3).

He probably stayed with them for the whole period of eighteen months, and when, after a brief visit to Judaea and Syria, he **settled in Ephesus**, it is most likely that he **stayed with them there too**, because at the end of his Corinthian ministry they moved from Corinth to Ephesus (Cf. Acts 18:19, 24–26).⁵

⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Pauline Circle* (Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books, 2017), 96.

1 Corinthians 16:19

The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

Romans 16:3-4

³ Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,

⁴ who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

As a helper to her husband Aquila, as a hostess to the apostle Paul, and hostess to the church which met in their home, Priscilla **opened both her heart and her home** to **her family and the church**.

There are preachers of great renown and great eloquence who will stand far behind Priscilla in the line for heavenly reward.

These three examples illustrate the **importance of woman making the home the heart** of their ministry to both their family and their church.

When Christian women follow the worldly wisdom of feminism and try to balance a career and family, the one ministry they frequently overlook is their ministry to the church.

There are countless ways in which **church members are not served** and **other women are not mentored** because the women of the church have **centred their labours on the workplace** instead of the home.

Should a wife be employed outside the home?

Caring for the home involves bearing children, training them, and managing the affairs of the home. All of that is a gift of God's grace to the woman. It is inextricably linked to the principle of the woman's being submissive to her own husband. If she works outside the home, she has a different set of circumstances with which to deal. She becomes accountable and submissive not only to her husband, but also to her boss at work. Other priorities often threaten the biblical priority of home and family, and a woman usually finds herself torn between fulfilling her biblical role and fulfilling a quite different role required by her job.

There is nothing in Scripture, however, that specifically forbids women from working, as long as they are fulfilling the priority in the home (Proverbs 31).

Whether a woman works outside the home or not, however, God's primary calling for her is to manage the home. It is the most exalted place for a wife. The world is what calls so many modern women out of the home, not the Lord. His Word portrays the woman's role as one preoccupied with domestic duties. It is a high calling, far more crucial to the future of a woman's children than anything she might do in an outside job....

In fact, from my perspective as a parent, it is difficult to see how a mother could possibly do all that needs to be done in the home with the upbringing of children, hospitality, care of the needy, and work for the Lord (cf. 1 Timothy 5:3–14) and still work in an outside job.

John F. MacArthur Jr., *What the Bible Says about Parenting: Biblical Principles for Raising Godly Children* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 225–226.