

Shepherds & Servants 15

Take Care of Widows

1 Timothy 5:3-16

Memory Verses: 1 Timothy 5:3

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Of course today we are celebrating a day of thanksgiving. We are thankful for you and for our church. We are thankful for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the blessings he has given us. We are thankful for our salvation and for the ministry God has allowed us to have. Of course that ministry extends to a very special group of people in our church. **We are thankful for our widows.**

The word of God spends quite a bit of time letting us know that true religion means caring for widows. Just look at **Psalm 68:5, Psalm 146:9, Deuteronomy 27:19**, and **James 1:27**. There can be little doubt that it is the responsibility of Elders and Deacons to care for the widows in the local church. Paul feels that ministry to widows is so important that he dedicates 14 verses to it here in chapter 5. Let's look at our passage this morning in **1 Timothy 5:3-16**. Honor widows! The main point this morning is simply... **The Local Church Should Care For Widows As Their Own Mother!**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we see here is that... **The Local Church Must Have A Plan To Support Needy Widows.** Look again at **verse 9**. The word "enrolled" literally means to be taken into the welfare of. She is put on a special list of widows who meet certain requirements, so that the church can support her financially, physically, and spiritually! The requirements to be "enrolled" as a needy widow are as follows. **Verse 9** says she must be 60 or older. Again, this number is a point of reference, not an exact number. We have to look at this in a cultural context. When this was written, not many people lived longer than 60. 60 was the age at which people were seen as prone to die soon. Thus a better understanding of this requirement would be, widows who are unable to take care of themselves or are in need of a great deal of physical and financial care because of their age. In our day and age, this may be 70 or even 80 years of age. However, we don't want to put a number on this that God hasn't. To be safe I would say, any widow over the age of 60 who is in critical need of physical, and financial care!

Secondly, she must be widowed because of natural reasons and not because of adultery. **Verse 9** also says she must be the wife of one husband. A better translation of this would be "a one man type of

woman." Meaning that when she was married, she didn't cheat. In the context of widows, this would suggest that she was widowed and not merely divorced because of adultery. She was a faithful wife. Does this mean that Christian women who have been divorced because of adultery and then became needy single women can't be cared for by the church? Of course not. If they repent of their sin in contrition and brokenness and commit to lives of faithful living for Christ they can be restored to the fellowship. As to whether or not they will be added to the list of widows who are financially and physically supported would then be up to the discretion of the elders.

Thirdly, she is a faithful, Christ following, partner of the local church ministry. Look at **verse 10**. She loves Christ so much that her testimony is that of good works, a good mother, hospitable, a servant, and devoted to the ministry of the local church. She isn't like the women in **verse 6** who are self-indulgent and spiritually dead. In her later years she can't do what she used to do, but her heart is there in spirit. Again, this requirement just shows that she is in right standing with the church who supports her. Which also shows, that it is her local church which is responsible for her, not another church across town. If she was faithful here we must now be faithful to her. According to **verses 4 & 5** she has loved her grandchildren and children and raised them to love Jesus the best that she can. If they have gone astray, she is still praying for them and wooing them back to the father.

Verse 5 sums up her plight and position. She is left alone having lost her earthly family to death or desertion, but her hope remains in Christ as she stays faithful in prayer and ministry the best she can. She has been a faithful mother but is now without faithful children. Who then becomes her children? The church! We do! We take care of her. We help her pay her bills. We help her get the medical attention she needs. We are there when others are not! **Just as we should never leave our own mothers out in the cold. Just as we should never abandon them or discard them, we cannot abandon or discard these faithful women in their time of need.** In a sense they are our spiritual mothers. We are thankful for them and for the opportunity to serve them. **The Local Church Should Care For Widows As Their Own Mothers.**

Which leads us to the next point. **Believers Should Take Care Of Their Widowed Mothers & Grandmothers.** Look again at **verse 4**. Verse 4 also clearly says that if a widow has children or grandchildren, that those children are responsible for caring for her. Of course, some have abandoned this responsibility and if that is the case, the church will pick up the slack. But this is a reminder, if you are a believer, you should never abandon your responsibility to care for you mother or grandmother. Especially if they've been widowed. Even now, think of your dear mother. Think of how she cared for you. Loved you. Raised you. Led you to Christ. Are you thankful for her? If so, now is the time to show it through every

means you have. Financially, physically, and spiritually!

True believers will care for their mothers. Plain and simple. In fact, Paul even goes so far as to say in **verse 8** "if someone doesn't take care of his relatives, especially those in their own house, especially their widowed momma, he has denied the faith and is worse than someone who doesn't even claim Christ. In other words, **It is better to be a straight up pagan Christ hater than to abandon your mother in need!** True believers would never! **The Local Church Should Care For Widows As Their Own Mothers.**

Lastly we must recognize that... **Christians Should Encourage Younger Widows To Remarry**. The last part here can get a little tricky. Lets first look at **11-13**. The idea here is that younger widows can a) take care of themselves to a degree, and b) if they have all their capabilities to live how they want and also have a revenue stream from the church, they will fall into a couple of sinful habits whether they be laziness, lust, and gossip. This should not be too hard to imagine. We now live in a society where even able bodied and capable people refuse to work because they can live off the welfare of the state. Instead they spend their days in idleness or sinfulness. Paul is warning us not to get caught in that mess.

But an even worse fate could await these idle women with a welfare stream... they could fall so far that they wander away from the faith. Could it be the very help we provide so enables people to wander from the church who is caring for them? Wouldn't that be a tragedy? **I assure you it happens. It's funny, but I never connected the dots until studying this. Without saying names or giving details, I will let you know that we have done this. Our church has supported younger widows with huge financial and physical contributions. This unfortunately added to their dependency upon others and enabled their habits of idleness. Now they no longer attend our fellowship and I am fearful that they are wandering away from the faith. We did this. With good intentions and in a spirit of servitude and christ-likeness we have violated the scriptures here and in the future, as Spiritual Shepherds and Sacrificial Servants, we must do better!**

So what should we do with younger widows? We should encourage one of two things. Look at **verse 14**. First, we should encourage younger widows to get healthy if possible, find a job or career to care for their families, or come up with solutions that sustain them financially in their current state. We do this on a weekly basis with benevolence requests. Almost every care portal request or benevolence request goes to help single mothers who are struggling to make ends meet because they've been abandoned by their men and have to help take care of elderly mothers. So we come beside them to not only pay their bill or buy some groceries, but we look at their finances and give

them tips and support to get back on a stable and sustainable income.

Secondly, if they are believers in the church, we should do all we can to encourage them to find a godly husband who can come along and shepherd them and care for them as well. **Through marriage all of their needs are cared for and there is no need for them to ever be idle, lustful, or slanderous.** This is God's plan for young widows.

Application

So the application this morning is clear. We care about all widows and we will help all widows to a degree. Just as we will help all people who God's children to a degree. We love as Christ loved. We serve as Christ served.

Conclusion

For our elderly widows without family, we will treat them like our mothers and care for them in a greater capacity. For our elderly widows with family who will care for them, we will serve them but to a lesser extent. We must give their children and grandchildren a chance to biblically care for them too. And for our younger widows we will help them care for themselves and encourage them to find a husband as to make a sustainable family situation. We would do all this for our own mothers, so we must do this for our spiritual mothers in the body of Christ! This thanksgiving we are thankful for our widows. **The Local Church Should Care For Widows As Their Own Mothers**