

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Timothy 5:11-13 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: The Disqualifying Choices of Younger Widows

READ: 1 Timothy 5:11-13, with vv.3, 9-10 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - The leadership in the church or ministry has an obligation before God to monitor the situation and plight of every widow in their congregation or ministry. (v.3)
- - Widows, parents, grandparents, and relatives who are really in need are to be provided for, with that responsibility and religious duty falling on their grown children, grandchildren, and relatives. (vv.3-4)
- - The people of God are included among those persons whom God holds responsible to provide tangible sufficient care for genuinely-needy widows. (v.7)
- - As part of the functioning of churches, God instructs that benevolent assistance be given to qualified widows, whose names are contained on a qualification list that is to be maintained.
- - The church should carefully, appropriately, and diligently follow the guidelines God has established to implement a benevolence fund for widows who qualify.
- - Now let's investigate further to find out what else God says about widows, particularly younger widows.

v.11 - READ

[Lesson Question: From verse 11, analyze and describe how God regards the response of younger widows to their situation of being widowed.]

SECTION POINT: Sensual desires propel younger widows to in effect become actively against God's will and objectives for them.

"As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list."

- - Next in the discussion about widows, the topic shifts to "younger widows", with the mandate from God to "do not put them on such a list".
- - Church leaders are herein instructed to "refuse" and "decline" to put any younger widows on the list, even if there is substantial pressure or objections from other people in the church. (Strong's #3868)
- - The younger widows are to be treated differently than the older qualified widows.

"For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry."

- - Due to their age, experience, and maturity level, the younger widows have a spiritually immature perspective and priorities, which adversely impact how they live.
- - Having been widowed, their natural desires for "pleasure of the senses" grow, becoming an overwhelming drive that propels them to want to remarry so much that

they abandon, or greatly minimize, or withdraw from their "dedication to Christ". (Strong's #2691 with AHD - 'voluptuous')

- - Thus, they live to pursue their desires rather than they live to pursue godly living and service for the Kingdom.

- - These two pursuits are contrary and in opposition to each other, resulting in the younger widows becoming actively against the cause of Christ. (Strong's #2691)

- - They yield to the compulsion to take matters into their own hands and remedy their unpleasant situation by pursuing worldly sensual means for the objective to remarry, rather than trusting God to provide and staying the course that God has for them.

- - Their self-preservation, self-fulfillment, and self-pleasure take precedent and control over their dedication to Kingdom objectives.

v.12 - READ

[Lesson Question: From verse 12, analyze and describe the additional issue or contention that God has with the response of younger widows to their situation of being widowed.]

SECTION POINT: Sensual desires also propel younger widows to divert away from their foremost commitment to God.

"Thus they bring judgment on themselves,"

- - By choosing to pursue worldly sensual means for the objective to remarry, younger widows incur upon themselves adverse judgment from God.

- - God distinctly disapproves of their change in pursuits, and He does not honor or bless this through the bestowing of any resources on them from the church.

- - Instead, God bestows adverse judgment for them to "have, hold, possess". (Strong's #2192)

"because they have broken their first pledge."

- - Having become single through the death of their husband, the younger widows face a major fork in the road for their life direction, and they choose the easier and more self-pleasurable path rather than stay on the tougher God-ordained path that would have yielded better and lasting long-term benefits for them.

- - By choosing and pursuing the self-pleasurable path, the younger widows "set themselves aside, or neutralize themselves, or violate themselves, or hold themselves in disfavor" (Strong's #0114), and divert away from their "first pledge" - their "foremost conviction of faith", which includes their commitment to God and their dedication to the cause of Christ. (Strong's #4413, #4102; v.11)

- - And as one consequence for choosing this path, God disqualifies them from being eligible to receive any relief assistance from the church's benevolence fund for widows.

v.13 - READ

[Lesson Question: From verse 13, analyze and describe from God's perspective how the behaviors of younger widows further degrade, due to their response to their situation of being widowed.]

SECTION POINT: By their nature in respect to their situation of being widowed, younger widows are inclined to become idle, which then facilitates them into also becoming gossips and busybodies.

"Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers,"

- - "Besides" being controlled by their "sensual desires" (v.11) and having diverted away from their foremost commitment to God (v.12), younger widows in the church "also" (Strong's #2532) naturally tend to become "idlers" (v.13) - "not employed, not working, not doing anything useful, not motivated to work" (Strong's #0692).
- - Even though the lifestyle path they have chosen yields more free time for them, they do not utilize or use that free time to pursue doing good deeds for the Kingdom. (cf. v.10)
- - Instead of finding constructive things to do or working to provide for their own basic necessities to live, the younger widows become 'social butterflies' - spending their day "strolling around" (Strong's #4022) "from house to house" talking and socializing, with few or no responsibilities of jobs to do - "idlers".
- - They have "learned", chosen, and "gotten into the habit" of living an easy, carefree life that, at its core, exploits the generosity of other people. (Strong's #3129)
- - The expectation from God here is that able-bodied people like younger widows are to work to support themselves, as clearly stated in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody."
- - Furthermore, younger widows have found a way to be enabled to waste the time God has given them for the doing of good deeds, which in essence is a passive form of rebellion, albeit a failure to respond to God, whom they previously had been devoted to.

"but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to."

- - In addition to having an issue with younger widows being "idlers", God also has an issue with them being "gossips and busybodies".
 - - They do excessive talking that is "trivial, or rambling, or improper, or irrelevant, or empty, or foolish", or gossiping. (Strong's #5397, with *AHD* - 'gossip', 'garrulous', 'impertinent', 'prater')
 - - Putting feet on their gossiping, young widows move from person to person, house to house, spreading their idle chatter and inappropriate speaking throughout their circle of cohorts. (Strong's #4021 - 'busybodies')
 - - They delight in learning and spreading news, and information, and gossip about other people, even to the extent of "eagerly offering unwanted advice" or "meddling in the affairs of other people". (Strong's #4021, with *AHD* - 'officious')
 - - The idleness of their situation supplies them opportunity and facilitates younger widows in being gossips and busybodies.
 - - Not content being isolated, quiet, and sedentary in their sinful wasting of time in idleness, younger widows further yield to sinful temptation by actively circulating around the community "saying things they ought not to".
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IMPLICATIONS:

- - Apparently, younger widows as a whole generally are prone to do this, to fall into these kinds of sinful behaviors (vv.11-13), and so therefore none of them are to be put on the list to be qualified to receive assistance from the church's benevolence fund for widows (v.11).
 - - The church has limited resources and therefore should allocate those resources wisely, where they are most likely to effect the greatest good or achieve the greatest results. (v.16)
 - - The church should not help to create idleness for people.
 - - Likewise, the church should not be condoning or inadvertently supporting inappropriate behavior, even through its benevolent program to needy widows.
 - - And because there is no stated or implied allowance to make any distinctions or any exceptions, therefore the church needs to allow the natural course of life to occur for younger widows, in order to test and refine them so that one day when they are older and have proven themselves godly, they can be rightly placed on the list.
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BIG IDEA: Younger widows are not to be qualified to receive assistance from the church's benevolence fund for widows because as a group they tend to engage in sinful responses to their situation of being widowed.

APPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you who determine, oversee, or administer the church's benevolence fund for widows, who is on your list?
- - Is each person qualified, as mandated in Scripture verses 9-11?
- - Are there any widows on the list who are younger than 60 years old? And if so, how do you justify this, considering the exclusionary mandate God gives you in verse 11a with corroborating detailed reasons in verses 11b-13?
- - In your administering of the church's benevolence fund for widows, are you above reproach in your obedience to these directives and intentions of God for the church's benevolence fund for widows?

- - For those of you able-bodied persons who have suffered a devastating loss and are in survival mode and mentality, are you diverting away from your foremost commitment to God?
- - Have you given yourself over to the pursuit of sensual desires?
- - Have you withdrawn some from your dedication to Christ?
- - Are you wallowing in self-pity and depression about the loss you have incurred, to the extent that you have become an idler?
- - Through your idleness, do you now exploit the generosity of other people, or your relatives, or the church, or the government?

- - As a result of your loss and perhaps subsequent dire situation, have your behaviors further degraded into regularly engaging in spreading gossip, empty chatter, or inappropriate speaking?
 - - Now that you have heard what God thinks about sinful responding to catastrophe in one's life, what steps can you immediately start taking to get back on track being right with God?
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[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - Is God saying that it is a sin for widows to want to remarry? Explain your answer. (Hint: see v.14)
 - - Is God saying that it is a sin to accept benevolence? Explain your answer.
 - - Is God saying that it is a sin to be socially active and interactive? Explain your answer.
 - - Is God saying that it is a sin to be intentionally unemployed if you are able-bodied? Explain your answer.
 - - Is God saying that it is acceptable to refrain from giving benevolence to needy people who are behaving in a substantially sinful manner? Explain your answer.]
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