

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Timothy 5:14-16 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: What God Prescribes For Younger Widows

READ: 1 Timothy 5:14-16, with vv.11-13 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. (v.9)
- - 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.
- - Now let's investigate further to find out what God prescribes that younger widows are to do about their situation of being widowed.

v.14 - READ

[Lesson Question: Analyze and describe the ramifications of what way God offers younger widows for them to fulfill their instincts and life goals.]

SECTION POINT: God approves that younger widows remarry and raise a family, but this must be accomplished in a godly manner that is above reproach.

"So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes"

- - As described in previous verses 11-13, younger widows as a group tend to engage in sinful responses to their situation of being widowed.
- - In consideration of this propensity of younger widows to divert away from godly living, the recommendation "therefore" is for them to proceed toward their goals of getting remarried and raising children. (Strong's #3767)
- - Of course, these goals should be pursued and accomplished through the exercising of godliness all along the way.
- - Younger widows should select a godly man to marry, and then raise their children in a godly household, with all propriety. (2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 Timothy 2:9-10)
- - Instead of outwardly "devoting [themselves] to all kinds of good deeds" (v.10), now the remarried widows will be concentrating their efforts inwardly - on the managing of their home in a godly manner.
- - Even though this inward focus of them raising a family significantly reduces their ability to extend the doing of good deeds outwardly (v.10), nevertheless God does approve of this direction for their life.

- - God approves of this alternative course of action because it is conducive to helping the younger widows function in a kind of lifestyle that is pleasing to God, even though their capacity to outwardly do good deeds is greatly reduced by the demands of raising a family and managing a home.
- - Properly raising children does involve responsibilities and activities that effectively eliminate idleness and its hazards, as described in verse 13.
- - And their focus is on the well-being of their children and their marriage, rather than on gratifying their own sensual desires, as cited in verse 11.
- - So now the objective for the remarried widows is to "manage" their homes - "guide the household" (*AMP*) into righteousness by training up their children in godliness, being a godly wife, creating and maintaining a godly atmosphere in their home, and modeling godliness for their children and their husband.

"and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander."

- - Raising a family and managing their home should satisfy the instincts and life goals that widows have. (cf. v.11)
- - But God instructs that the means by which they accomplish this fulfillment of their life is to be in a manner that "gives the enemy no opportunity for slander".
- - Even though in raising a family at home they are less publicly visible than they would be as a busybody idler going from house to house (v.13), the remarried widows nevertheless are being watched and critiqued by neighbors and the surrounding community.
- - God desires that the remarried widows not create any 'cause' for other people to have an "opportunity" to "slander" or speak about them and their faith in a disparaging and damaging way. ('cause' - Strong's #5484, omitted in the *NIV*)
- - In other words, another objective from God is for the remarried widows from within their own home to be a good witness of their faith to their community, and not a bad witness.
- - Enemies of the faith live in the surrounding community, and they are looking for legitimate faults to discredit, criticize, reproach, exploit, advertise, and reap havoc in the lives of believers, in their church, and in God's program.
- - An interesting twist here is that in verse 13 when following their own vices, the widows were the ones doing the slandering and committing the gossiping, targeting other people with their idle chatter; now in verse 14 when following God's approach, the remarried widows become the targets, who have slander and gossip aimed at them.
- - God wants the younger widows to each be a woman of godly virtue and above reproach, rather than be a worldly woman of idle chatter and diverted away from the faith.

v.15 - READ "Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan."

[Lesson Question: Analyze and describe from God's perspective what the reality is for younger widows who "turn away to follow Satan".]

SECTION POINT: By their choices of actions, some younger widows have defected, and are now working for Satan even though formerly they had been working for God.

- - The directive in verse 14 to be godly in the functioning of raising a family is given 'because' some younger widows "have already turned away" from this and the faith. ('because' - Strong's #1063, omitted in the *NIV*)
 - - By their choices, some younger widows are no longer acting in accordance to God and His Word, even though they had previously been doing that.
 - - They have not only turned away, but they "in fact" follow Satan, the "accuser". ('in fact' (Strong's #3694) is stated with extra accentual emphasis in the Greek; 'accuser' - Strong's #4567)
 - - As a result of their choices, these younger widows have changed allegiances away from God's kingdom and instead onto Satan's kingdom.
 - - Their time, attention, purposes, activities, thinking, and speaking are now oriented to in effect follow the agenda, purposes, and direction of the Kingdom of Darkness, as its workers and agents.
 - - Whether in full knowledge or unwittingly, they are now cooperating and collaborating with what Satan wants and is perpetrating.
 - - Having previously tasted the goodness of God (vv.11,12), these younger widows apparently instead prefer and gravitate to various sinful indulgences (vv.11,13) that align with Satan's agenda (v.15).
 - - The reality, then, is that their choices of responses in reaction to their widowed situation after the death of their husband have lead them down a path that has effectively converted them from formerly being an ambassador for Christ (v.11) to now being an agent for Satan.
 - - And notice that now these younger widows are working just like Satan does to perpetrate the same destructive activities against the faith as the enemies of the faith in the community do, as referred to in verse 14.
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v.16 - READ

[Lesson Question: Explore, determine, and cite the implementation procedures, logistics, and ramifications of the directive in this verse 16.]

SECTION POINT: God instructs believer family members to sufficiently supply assistance to their needy relative widows so that the church will have adequate resources to help other needy widows.

"If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them"

- - As previously stated in verses 4 and 8, family members have a responsibility to provide care for the widows in their family.
- - This responsibility is especially applicable to believers, who are expected by God to be "trustworthy" (Strong's #4103) and "to put their religion into practice" (v.4) in this regard.
- - Because there is a potential and a danger of an inappropriate relationship developing between an assisting male relative and a needy widow, the preference is for women believers to take the lead in being responsibility to "help" and take care of other women who are widows in their family.
- - There also may be a natural barrier or hindrance to men understanding and relating sufficiently to widows and their plight, their survival outlook, their widow perspective, and their ongoing predicament.

- - So, the best approach is for believer women relatives to personally interact with the needy widows and implement the providing of assistance, while the men in the family function in a supportive capacity that consistently avoids potentially compromising environments and situations with a widow.

- - In order to "help" the genuinely-needy widow and actually "relieve" her dire survival predicament, the amount of assistance being provided should be substantial enough to be appropriately adequate to fill her survival needs. (Strong's #1884)

- - And because the widow's situation may not improve over time, the amount of assistance will need to be extended for as long as warranted or needed by the widow.

- - So, everyone involved in donating resources for the assistance of the widow will need to be aware and to expect that this situation may protract into a long-term arrangement.

"and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need."

- - An important resulting objective for this approach to assisting widows is to take on this expenditure so that the church is displaced and not "burdened" with it.

- - Certainly, the church likewise has this responsibility to provide this care, but the priority being established by God here is that the believer family members are foremost responsible, with the church being secondary or backup responsible after or behind the family members.

- - The reasoning for the church being secondarily responsible is because the church can thereupon be freed and better enabled to help other widows who are not receiving tangible sufficient support from their family members.

- - This is prudent resource management - an administrative process that purposes and strives to maximize allocation of resources in order to adequately meet all of the genuine needs of all of the qualified widows in the church.

- - Therefore, a reasonable implied assumption is that God will generally provide enough resources if careful management is exercised, but continuing abundant resources generally will not be provided in excess.

- - So, wasting or splurging or diverting of resources is clearly not in accord with the way God usually provides resources to churches.

- - Therein, believers need to be mindful not only to the needs and well-being of widows in their family but also to the needs and well-being of their church.

- - The actions or inactions of believers can and do impact other people around them both in and outside the church.

BIG IDEA: God prescribes that younger widows respond in godliness to their life situation, and believer relatives are to responsibly come to their support.

APPLICATIONS:

-- For those of you who had a spouse die, are you on the path or course of action that God has prescribed in this Scripture passage?

- - - Or by your actions are you in actuality following the ways of the world, which of course is in direct opposition to God's ways?

-- Are you excelling at "giving the enemy no opportunity" to find fault with you? (v.14)

- - - Or by your actions are you supplying the enemy with plenty of ammunition to successfully shoot accusations at you, at this church, and at God's Kingdom?

-- For those of you believers who have a relative widow in genuine need of assistance, are you being trustworthy and responsible to supply that assistance as much as you can? And with persistence?

- - - Or by the sin of inaction are you defaulting to letting the church fulfill the responsibility and the role that God has assigned you to fulfill?

-- For all of the rest of you, is there any way in which you can help bring some relief to a genuinely-needy widow in the church? Assistance that is financial? Or resources? Or free housing? Or free use of your extra automobile? Or food? Or work? Or hire the widow? Or give recommendations to employers to hire the widow?

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - Without disclosing identifying information, describe pertinent aspects of various ways you have seen previously-godly widows "turn away to follow Satan" (v.15). And can you determine any driving principles or beliefs they had that compelled them to turn away - like intense fear of being alone, or intense fear of dying from hunger, for examples?]

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