

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Timothy 5:9-10 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: The Benevolence Fund For Qualified Widows

READ: 1 Timothy 5:9-10, with v.3 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - Ministry leaders are directed by God to regard and treat as close beloved family members the men and women attending their ministry. (vv.1-2)
- - 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)
- - Believers are to put their faith into action by tangibly and sufficiently meeting the genuine needs of their family members and relatives for survival assistance. (v.8)
- - Now let's investigate further to find out what else God says about genuinely-needy widows, their plight, and God's remedy.

from v.9 - READ "**No widow may be put on the list of widows unless...**"

[Lesson Question: What "list" is being referred to here and what implications are generated from the phrase "be put on the list of widows"?)

SECTION POINT: 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.

"...**be put on the list of widows...**"

- - Presumably, finances and resources in churches are typically always less than surrounding needs and thereby they are a precious commodity that needs to be managed carefully.
- - So churches are to maintain a list of widows who are eligible to receive this valuable benevolent assistance from the church. (v.16)
- - Logically, that list would need to be regularly updated and kept current.
- - Someone or group in the church will need to actively determine and review which widows are currently qualified to be on the list.
- - Also, this benevolent assistance fund for qualified widows would need to be replenished as warranted.
- - Therefore, someone or group in the church will need to actively manage the money and resources in this fund.
- - Furthermore, as a wise precaution to reduce temptation to misappropriate the money and resources in this fund, a means of management accountability needs to be consistently implemented regarding this fund.

v.9 - READ

[Lesson Question: Develop a reasonable explanation as to why the two requirements cited in this verse 9 are being established by God here.]

SECTION POINT: God instructs that to be eligible for this benevolence from a church, widows must be in their elderly years over sixty and also that they must have an unblemished history of living rightly in their marriage to their only husband.

"No widow may be put on the list of widows unless..."

- - God has specified requirements that are to be adhered to and used for determining who qualifies to be put on the list of widows that are eligible to receive assistance resources from this benevolent fund.
- - Therefore, God is authorizing that priority and preference be given to certain people, specifically to those widows who meet God's qualification requirements as cited in this passage.
- - The intent here appears to be a targeting of those widows whom God is pleased with, who have been living and modeling a godly life.

"unless she is over sixty"

- - There is an age requirement here - widows on the list must be at least sixty years old.
- - The implication is that widows over sixty usually will be experiencing a diminishment of physical abilities, which exacerbates as time goes on.
- - This increasing physical incapacitation is a natural process of old age, and it naturally propels each person into becoming more needy of assistance as time goes on.
- - Therefore, widows over sixty will naturally become increasingly unable to physically implement ways to support themselves.
- - In contrast, widows younger than sixty are generally physically capable of doing work to support themselves, and therefore are expected to do so without the assistance of the church's benevolence fund.

"has been faithful to her husband"

- - God also establishes the qualification that the widow "has been the wife of one man", suggesting that she "has been faithful to her husband". (from Strong's #1096, #1520, #0435, #1135)
 - - The benefits from this benevolent fund established by God are to go to those qualified widows who have lived rightly in their marriage to their husband.
 - - And thereby, they have not ever been divorced in the past.
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v.10 - READ

[Lesson Question: Analyze and describe each of these cited virtues as they pertain to widows who qualify to be on the list.]

SECTION POINT: God instructs that an eligible widow must have a history that has comprehensively demonstrated a righteous, and caring, and servant's heart.

-- In verse 10, more requirements are specified for widows to be qualified to be on the list for the church's benevolent fund.

"and is well known for her good deeds, such as..."

-- God instructs here that each qualified widow must have a history of doing good deeds.

-- Her history of doing good deeds testifies and witnesses to the faith she holds and to what is in her heart, her nature. (Strong's #3140)

-- Some specific examples cited here are:

"bringing up children"

----- A qualified widow has taken seriously her God-given responsibilities pertaining to raising her children.

----- She has consistently demonstrated a genuine and proper love for her children, with matching nurturing actions.

"showing hospitality"

----- A qualified widow has been consistent in showing hospitality, having a genuine and proper loving concern and active generosity for the well-being and comfort of other people around her, which includes strangers. (Strong's #3580)

"washing the feet of saints"

----- A qualified widow has a humble servant's heart, always finding ways that she personally can serve other believers.

----- And by extension, she eagerly helps in projects, programs, and activities of God's people and her church, in order to personally and tangibly contribute to the Kingdom. (cf. v.11 - "dedication to Christ")

"helping those in trouble"

----- A qualified widow sincerely cares about people who are "afflicted", or in distress, or in trouble. (Strong's #2346)

----- So, she takes significant action to help, to "relieve", and perhaps to remedy their difficult situations that other people are going through. (Strong's #1884)

"and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds"

----- A qualified widow seeks out and enjoys doing good deeds for other people.

----- She is an active participant in doing good deeds, being dedicated, diligent, helpful, hard working, and others-oriented.

----- Matter of fact, she prefers and is more comfortable participating in doing good deeds rather than standing on the side and merely watching other people doing good deeds.

-- Essentially, each widow who qualifies to be on the list must have demonstrated in some manner over the years her love and devotion to God, her church, her family, and her neighbors.

IMPLICATIONS - for the church and its leadership:

[Lesson Question: List as many implications for the church as you can that are generated from this discussion on the required qualifications to be on the list of widows.]

SECTION POINT: The church needs to exercise carefulness, appropriateness, and diligence in its implementation of this benevolence fund for qualified widows.

- - The church has a mandated responsibility from God to ensure the care and providing for the widows who are no longer capable of providing for themselves.
- - The church has a God-instructed right and responsibility to prioritize the giving of and dispensing of its resources to those widows who have been genuinely living exemplary godly lives dedicated to actively serving the Kingdom. (v.11)
- - Thereby, the church leadership has a responsibility to adequately and consistently maintain this list of qualified widows, to update it regularly, and to take action from it in a timely manner. To properly update the list, personal information would need to be periodically acquired about the current conditions of each widow's situation.
- - Nowhere does God state or even imply that preference is to be given on other bases, such as being a relative or girlfriend of an officer in the church, for example.
- - Surely, there is to be no favoritism, no partiality, no bending or breaking the requirement rules, and no exceptions that contradict or circumvent these requirements that have been distinctly and clearly given by God. (cf. James 2:1,9)

- - An appropriate conclusion is that widows not qualified to be on this list are not to have their name put on this list and are not to be given any money or resources from this fund.
- - Logically of course, if a church wants to extend assistance to widows who are not qualified to be on this list, then some other way would have to be established that is apart from, secondary to, and subservient to this God-prescribed list of qualified widows benevolence - assuming that there is in the church an ongoing overabundance of extra money and resources.
- - But keep in mind that God wants the priority to placed upon the widows who He finds to be worthy of this bestowment of special blessing and honor.
- - And as a side consequence, these qualified widows who have a history of devoted serving are essentially being enabled by the church to continue doing their good deeds, even though these qualified widows have diminished resources and a precarious financial situation.
- - For the church, this essentially is an investment in its workers, like supporting missionaries in its ranks.

BIG IDEA: The church is to follow the guidelines God has established to implement a benevolence fund for widows who qualify.

APPLICATIONS:

- Does this church have a benevolence fund for widows? If not, why not?
- - - - And if so, does this church correctly follow the guidelines as described in this Scripture passage? If not, why not?

-- Does this church use a system of accountability to ensure that its benevolence fund for qualified widows is managed and administered properly? If not, why not?
- - - - And if so, what are the characteristics of this system of accountability?

-- Has this church been doing a good job at managing and administering its benevolence fund for qualified widows?
- - - - If not, what changes need to be made to improve performance in managing and administering this fund?

-- Within the last two years, have the amounts of money and resources in the benevolence fund for qualified widows been adequate to cover the needs of the qualified widows in this church?
- - - - If not, what corrective action has been taken by the church's leadership in attempt to remedy this deficiency?

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

- - Keeping in mind the various objectives that God wants accomplished through this benevolence fund for qualified widows, are there any conditions under which any of God's requirements should be waived?
- - Should a qualified widow be put on the list who is able-bodied but is lazy and unwilling to work, and instead she spends much of her time engaging in self-pleasuring and perhaps expensive activities, such as riding her horses, for example?]

Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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File name: 1Timothy5-9-10-SermonOrLesson.____ (.htm, .doc, .pdf)
Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document
Source: www.BelieverAssist.com
Updated: November 4, 2017