



**Faith Baptist Church of Cabot, Arkansas**  
**Pastor's Mid-Week Bible Study**  
**January 6, 2010**

**Lesson Fifteen – Older Men, Older Women & Widows**  
**1 Timothy 5:1-16**

**Introduction**

As a defender of Truth, a rebuker of heretics and example to the church, how does a minister practically relate to the people and lead them in their relationship with one another?

**Exegesis**

❖ Caring as Family (1-2)

- Treat older men like dads – which means you do not use words to beat them down, but take them alongside to correct or encourage
- Treat younger men like brothers
- Treat older women like mothers
- Treat younger women like sisters – which means you protect them and do not take advantage of them

❖ Caring for Family: *In the Church or in the Home* (3-16)

- Honor widows who are really widows (3)

“Honor” means to affix a value to something and thus have an appreciation and respect for it. Those who are “really widows” in the church are to be so honored by the church. Paul expounds on being a real widow in the following verses.

- Charity begins at home (4)

“Grandchildren” is from a word meaning “descendants.” It is translated “nephews” in the KJV. Paul’s point is that if a widow has children and/or other descendants, they are her first line of care. Her descendants are instructed to do two things: 1) show her piety, or reverence, at home and 2) repay her in her time of need for all she has invested in their lives in their times of need, from diapers to adulthood. Such family care is good, that is excellent and praiseworthy, and is acceptable before God. God wants family to care for family in word and deed.

- The real widow (4-6)

From the church’s perspective, a widow indeed is a widow who is truly left alone. She has no one to care for her and does not have the means to care for herself. Consider that in times of persecution all the men in a woman’s life could have been taken and killed for the faith leaving her truly alone and bankrupt.

Further, Paul adds that for this widow who has truly been left alone to be honored by the church, she must also be a woman who trusts in God. The word translated “trusts” is the

word often rendered “hope.” It speaks of the expectation that arises from one’s faith. This then is a woman who believes in God and anticipates that He will care for her. She is not coming to church with a hand out looking for money, but rather with her head up looking to God. In fact, he says that she is a woman of abiding prayer, taking her needs before the Lord and trusting that He will provide.

*“But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.”* Paul now sets the contrast to the widow who trusts in God. This widow is self-indulgent, given to the pleasures of the world. Rather than hoping in the Lord, she looks to the world for sustenance and satisfaction. She seeks to fill the void left in her life not with Christ, but with worldly pleasure. She is described as living yet having been dead. Is it that her self-indulgent lifestyle reveals that she has never been born again to life in Christ? Maybe. Is it that by seeking fulfillment in the things of the world she is living a life of hopelessness and desperation, a life of death? Absolutely.

➤ The minister’s message (7)

The fact is that the loss of a spouse creates a circumstance of trial and temptation. The grief and loneliness that ensues demands comfort, healing, and hope. Where will one turn to find solace in a time of grief? “These things” are the things of trusting and hoping in God, turning to Him with confidence that He will provide one’s needs and satisfy one’s soul. “These things” are to be commanded so that, prayerfully, a widow will listen to God’s truth and not make choices that would bring reproach upon her.

➤ The family that fails (8)

A widow who has family is to be cared for by her family. Someone who will not so care for family is met with harsh words from the Apostle. In his refusal to demonstrate the most basic kindness of Christian love, such a person has in his actions denied the faith. This believer’s refusal to love his own flesh and blood denies the Lord of love and makes himself worse than an unbeliever. How? Because the believer knows better.

➤ Qualification for church care (9-10)

“Taken into the number” means to be registered. Evidently, in at least the church at Ephesus where Timothy was pastor, those who were really widows were enrolled in ministry, given “jobs,” if you will, in the church. The church then provided for their needs through the ministry of the deacons. Paul gives specific guidelines for the enrollment of a woman in this program:

- Age – at least sixty years old.
- Morality – wife of one man. It is literally translated “one man woman.” She is to have been a faithful and devoted spouse.
- Reputation – known for her good works. Paul gives examples such as the rearing of her children, hospitality, care for the basic needs of the saints, ministry to the afflicted, and diligence in every area of good works.

Widows who met these criteria could be ministered to by the church while they ministered to the church. While age would at some point certainly begin to hinder one’s physical abilities and limit one’s ministry capacity, the Apostle seems hesitant to endorse

the support of widows without an expectation of ministry involvement. Consider the instruction he gave to the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.

➤ Why younger widows are not to be enrolled (11-15)

The first reason is sexual desire. “To grow wanton” means to feel the impulses of sexual desire. Enrollment in the church’s widow care program seems to have involved a commitment for the rest of the widow’s life. To make such a commitment and then desire the longing for marriage could create resentment against Christ and if succumb to result in the widow breaking her commitment to the church. Worst, the temptation could result in her rebelling against Christ, casting off her first faith in favor of some man, even any man, to fulfill her sexual impulse.

The second reason is youthful vitality. There seems to have been enough to keep the older widows busy and satisfied in their work at the church but not necessarily enough for the younger. So, they would tend toward laziness, nosiness, and gossip. This may have already manifested itself in the church. Thus, rather than ministering beneficially to the church, they would begin to hinder the church.

The practical solution is that the younger widows should marry, have children if they are young enough, and spend their time managing their household affairs.

The spiritual impact of not following this counsel is that young widows will fall into sin, bringing reproach upon themselves, the church, and Christ. That this was happening in the church at Ephesus seems evident since “some already have turned aside after Satan.” Paul’s concern was not merely the practical implications of sex and idleness, but the spiritual implications of sin.

➤ The responsibility of family (16)

If a believer has a widow in his or her family, it is the believer’s responsibility to care for the widow, providing aid in her time of need. In doing so, the church is free to care for those who truly need assistance. Paul is not urging the church to avoid providing care. Rather, Paul is encouraging Christians to be Christian in their families and is encouraging the church to provide care for those who actually need it.

### **Application**

1. As a church, we should treat one another like God’s family.
2. We should teach and expect believers to care for the widows within their particular families.
3. We should teach and encourage widows the importance of hoping in God and seeking His provision lest they turn to the world to fill the emptiness created by the deaths of their husbands.
4. We should give assistance to those who are truly widows.
5. We should expect those we assist to meet the qualifications laid down by the Apostle Paul and to be involved in ministry within the church as their health permits.

## **Final Thoughts**

Our culture is different than that in which Paul and Timothy ministered. For example, those to whom Timothy ministered did not have Social Security benefits, Medicare benefits, retirement accounts, etc. But, from reading Paul's letters, they did seem to have their share of lazy children and irresponsible families.

Still, the truths of Paul's instruction to Timothy and the Ephesus Church hold true today. There are those who will justifiably need assistance within our church and the love of Christ within us demands that we compassionately meet those needs. The wisdom of Christ demands that we do so as good stewards of the church's donations. The truth of Christ demands that we not do so indiscriminately lest we enable people in their sin.

Let us then in any ministry of compassion at Faith Baptist Church care for people Biblically, honestly, prayerfully, and lovingly. May we with equal grip hold in one hand the unchanging truth of God and His Word and in the other the unfailing compassion of Christ. And so may our Savior be distinctly seen within the fellowship of this church as we speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and as we love in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18).

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This lesson was prepared by Brent D. Summerhill, Pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Cabot, Arkansas. Permission is granted to reproduce this lesson, but please do not alter the content.  
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