



First Timothy

The Widows

Humble Helpers

I Timothy 5:9, 10

Lesson Twenty-Two

Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex Curriculum



First Timothy

A Study of the First Letter of the Apostle Paul to His Son in the Faith

The Widows

In this lesson, we are going to be talking about a subject that Paul chose because of the situation in both the church and society. Our Scripture teaches us some spiritual truths along with Paul's instruction to the church about caring for older widows. Read I Timothy 5:9, 10.

The instructions here are very specific. As we saw in last week's lesson, there were many widows in the church. And, the church had the responsibility to care for them. But, there was the problem that if the church tried to care for all the widows, they would have too much to deal with. Also, some widows should care for themselves. Paul decided that he would give Timothy some help in guiding the church in selecting the widows who were "really in need." (See verse three.)

The first thing he said was that if a widow was more than sixty years old, she would be considered for putting on the list. The church must have had a list of people who needed to be helped. Remember, in Acts 6:1, there were widows in the church who were being "overlooked for the daily distribution of the food." It would seem reasonable that the churches would need to have a list available so that no one would be overlooked.

If a widow was eligible to be put on the list, there were other things in her life that needed to be considered:

1. She must have "been faithful to her husband." This can also mean, "the wife of one husband." Either way, the widow who is eligible for assistance must be the kind of woman who was loyal to her husband until he died.
2. She must be well known for her good deeds. The widow who is eligible for the help of the church should have been known, even when her husband was alive, to be someone who was busy doing good things for others.
3. She must be known as a good mother. Other people would have seen her caring for and teaching her own children to be well behaved Christians.
4. She must be known as someone who shows hospitality. As we said in an earlier lesson, hospitality, welcoming travelers to your home, was a Christian activity needed in that day.
5. She must be known as someone who "washes the feet of the saints." Of course, this can be taken literally, because one of the tasks of a good host was to wash the dirt off the sandal-clad feet of people who came into a house or building. It can also be seen as describing an attitude of humility which leads Christians to serve others.
6. She must be a helper to those in trouble. This was not just an illness or some passing problem, trouble here refers to all kinds of difficult things, including persecution. (See II Corinthians 4:8, 9.)
7. She must be known as a woman who spends her time doing all kinds of other good deeds. This is a phrase that Paul used often in describing the Christian life that is lived like Jesus lived. (See Colossians 1:10.) Jesus went around helping, healing, teaching and encouraging people. That is a great example for widows, and for all of us.

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In light of what Paul listed as the characteristics for widows who deserved assistance from the church, how should we live? Though these character traits and behaviors are applied to older women here, should they not also act as a guide for all of us? Let's think this through:

Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 5:16 to "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds, and praise your Father in Heaven." The widows were to be women whose good deeds were "well known." They didn't just do something good once in a while so that they could look good, they were consistently doing good things and people took notice. Jesus challenged them, and us, to do good things for people; things that were truly helpful, and when those things were seen, people would praise God. Too often our good deeds are for making us look good, not for making God look good. A Christian who is behaving like Jesus doesn't have to go looking for something good to do, nor does that person have to do something that is obvious to other people. When something good is done, people will be blessed and God will get the praise.

Maybe we can sum up the list of seven good things about the older widows this way. They were good parents, they were willing hostesses who welcomed people who needed care. They were humble servants always willing to help. Think again, maybe we could condense it even more by saying that they were humble helpers.

When you think about it, the key to all of this is humility. Maybe we should look at the word humble to be sure we understand what Paul is talking about here. A person who is humble is modest, uncomplicated, sincere, doesn't put on a mask or pretend to be someone they aren't...sort of a "what you see is what you get" kind of a person. That is exactly who Jesus was while He was here on Earth.

Now, when that kind of person does something good for someone else, the person being helped can clearly see that the helper is a truly kind person, doing something because they are themselves servants of God. God gets the praise!

What do we learn from Paul's description of widows who are "really in need?" We learn that God honors those who are humble helpers.

*Underlined words and phrases are to be used in completing the Student Worksheet.

Lesson Goal: To encourage students to live lives of humility, serving others as Jesus did.

Scripture Memory: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds, and praise your Father in Heaven." Matthew 5:16

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Student Worksheet—Following Through

The Widows

>What was the age requirement to be put on the list of widows served by the church?

>What were the seven additional requirements for widows which would make them eligible for the list?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

>God honors those who are _____ helpers.

For Memory: “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds, and praise your Father in Heaven.” Matthew 5:16

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God’s Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.