



First Timothy

Young Widows

Live Life Fully but Faithfully

I Timothy 5:11-15

Lesson Twenty-Three



First Timothy

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

Young Widows

We should be reminded that the time in which Paul was writing to Timothy and the church at Ephesus was much different than today. There was no life insurance, no Social Security, no Medicare, nor were there any other governmental or community programs to care for those who could not care for themselves. Also, there were few jobs in which a woman could earn a living, no matter what her age. Of course there were exceptions, and some women, like Lydia of Philippi, were business women and could take care of themselves. But this was very rare.

In today's lesson, we read about young women whose husbands had died. As stated in a previous lesson, many people didn't live as long. Some professions, such as soldiers, died young and illness as well as other life situations meant that some younger women were widows. Paul doesn't tell us how large a group of women this was, but the church was responsible for seeing that those who could not provide for themselves were cared for as much as possible.

Last week we read what Paul had to say about taking care of older widows. Today, we read about what he had to say about care for younger widows. Read I Timothy 5:11-15.

So, if a widow was under sixty, she was on her own. This did not prohibit women from committing themselves to serve the church. With older widows, they were to give themselves to serving God through His church as the church provided the necessities of life for them. There seems to have been some kind of formal vow when a widow was added to the list of women assisted by the church. So, as long as the church was providing for them, they were to be active in the work of the church. Since the church met in people's homes, the widows would very likely make their services available to the home owners to assist in preparing for the meetings of the church. Since the church had no building or staff, many of the ministries had to be carried out through the work of individuals in the church. So, the widows could find much to do, if they made themselves available.

Was Paul being unfair to younger widows? No. It seems pretty clear that some young widows had been put on the list in the past, but it had not been a good thing. There were several things that made them different than older widows.

First, the younger widows could marry again. After their husbands died, they would be lonely. Also, they might want to have a family, or if they already had children, they needed a husband to help with the children.

Second, if they were supported by the church, they might find themselves with time on their hands, just visit around a lot and hear a lot of gossip, and even repeat the gossip which is

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often condemned in the Bible. (See, II Corinthians 12:20)

Third, by making a commitment to the widows list (the vow mentioned earlier) then changing their mind, they show that they are not really serving God and the church first.

So, what happens? Well first of all, they could have their mind so filled with dreams of getting married again and having a family that they ignore their vow to God and to the church.

Second, by being free to visit around and gather gossip, they run the risk of becoming busybodies. This is not a good thing. (See II Thessalonians 3:11) There is a scary Scripture in Ezekiel 16:49. God condemned Israel for their sins. He told them that they were like Sodom, the city that God destroyed. He said they “had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but did not help the poor and needy.” This is the kind of thing Paul saw as a possibility for younger widows with not enough to do, or not doing all that they could do.

Third, Paul said that the younger widows should get married again. What all this meant to young women who were mourning the death of their husbands, who were caring for children without a father, who were facing starvation, we don’t really know. What we do know is that Paul saw this course of action to be the best thing for them.

What we do know is that living the life described as gossipers and busybodies was not what God wanted for them and not what would make their lives meaningful or happy. That kind of living is not only harmful to the person living it, but very harmful to those about whom the widows might be gossiping.

When the younger widow was married, having children and making a home for her family, she became a blessing to her family and a good Christian testimony to her community.

Did this mean that if a young widow could not get married she was ignored by the church. No. The church felt a responsibility for all the people who were in need, so the church would help her just as they helped others who needed help. This simply means that the younger widow was not added to the widows list, which obligated the widow to special service to the church.

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

Lesson Goal: To help students see that God is concerned about everything in our lives.

Scripture Memory: “So, I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.” I Timothy 5:14

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Student Worksheet—Following Through

Younger Widows

>There were several things that made younger widows different than older widows:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

>So, what happens when these things are going on?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

>When the younger widow was married, having children and making a _____ for her family,

she became a blessing to her _____ and a good Christian _____ to her community.

For Memory: “So, I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.” I Timothy 5:14

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.