

Caring for Widows Indeed

1 Timothy 5:3-16

Next, Paul continues to give instructions to Timothy about how he was to interact with various types of saints in the congregation. The last group Paul mentions is widows. Unlike the other groups, Paul gives a lengthy series of guidelines for Timothy to use in providing for certain widows. While the exact situation is unknown, there may have been a group of widows in the church at Ephesus. Caring for their needs was a real issue for this church.

Paul explains a set of criteria to be used to determine whether or not the local church collectively were permitted to assume the care of a widow. Not all widows will meet this criteria. Notwithstanding, individuals and or families within the local church are permitted to help any needy saint or non-saint. Paul is not discouraging or restricting Christians from taking care of one another. Rather, he places limitations on what the local church is permitted to provide from their common treasury.

1) Does the widow have family? If the widow has children and or grandchildren, Paul instructs the family to provide for her. Certainly, this is how children and grandchildren honor their parents/grandparents. Paul describes such care as an act of godliness. Those who will not take care of their family have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers.

2) Is the widow godly in her behavior? Paul distinguishes between a widow who has set her hope on

God and one who is self-indulgent.

3) Widows enrolled to the care of the church must not be under the age of sixty. They must have been the wife of one husband. She has a proven reputation for godliness and service.

4) Widows under the age of sixty are not to be enrolled to the care of the church. They are to be encouraged to remarry. If they were still in their childbearing years, they could remarry and have children. In this ancient society, women struggled to function economically without a husband and family. Remaining a widow as a younger woman was not a realistic option. More than the societal element implicit in Paul's instructions, he was concerned idleness could lead some younger widows away from the faith. Sadly, this had already happened within the church at Ephesus.