

A Study of 1 Timothy 5:1-16

*Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers,
2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.*

3 Honor widows who are truly widows. 4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. 5 She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, 6 but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. 7 Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

9 Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, 10 and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. 11 But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry 12 and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. 13 Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. 14 So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. 15 For some have already strayed after Satan. 16 If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

In the first three verses, Paul is instructing Timothy on how to interact with different groups in the church. What does he say and what does he mean by it?

Older men

Younger men

Older women

Younger sister

What biblical principle is Paul reminding Timothy of – one we discussed when studying the household codes in Ephesians?

What does this tell us about expressing God's love?

In verse 3, Paul introduces a new section that addresses a problem in the Ephesians church. Here are some key points regarding widows in the first century.

- Marriages were arranged, which meant a greater age disparity.
- Women generally have longer life expectancies than men.
- Widows were of every age with a substantial number considered young.

- Many people lived subsistently.
- There were no government programs or retirement accounts to take care of widows.
- The Ten Commandment dictate to “honor” parents meant that children were to take care of them and not just respect them.
- Christians continued the Jewish practice of caring for widows.
- Many widows still did not receive the care that they need.

In verses 4-8, Paul defines who is “truly” a widow. What does he describe here?

In verse 6, Paul points out the fundamental problem with the widows who are not true widows. What is that problem?

How does helping these kinds of widows actually hurt them?

How does Paul view not helping them as a grace to them?

In verses 9-10, Paul is describing the kinds of widows who should be helped. What is different about these widows? What is reflected in their actions?

In verses 11-16, Paul describes what happens (and probably had happened at Ephesus) when the church helps those who (1) do not need it and (2) are taking advantage of it?

This is another example of how the church at Ephesus had gotten off track. The problem with the young widows very likely predated the false teachers, who took advantage of the situation. How does Paul’s reminder to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16 help prevent this from happening?

The church at Ephesus was weakened by focusing too much on the immediate needs of widows and not enough on the overall needs of the widows and the church. What are some other ways that churches are weakened by overemphasizing one aspect over another?