

Message #30

I Timothy 5:9-10

The words in **verse 9** “put on the list” have been interpreted to mean at least two things:

- 1) Some have suggested they refer to the context and the list of widows who should be fully supported by the church; 2) Others suggest this refers to a specific list of widows who were employed by the church, accountable to the elders and deacons, who particularly looked into the matters pertaining to the women and children.

A good case can be built for both.

IF THE CHURCH OF GOD IS TO BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH, IT MUST BE A PLACE THAT TAKES GOOD CARE OF WIDOWS WHO BIBLICALLY QUALIFY FOR CARE FROM THE CHURCH.

So far we have looked at five prerequisites or qualifications for being classified as a “widow indeed” by Biblical definition.

- 1) A widow that the church is responsible for is one who has no family members to look after her. 5:4a, 8, 16
- 2) A widow that the church is responsible for is one who is all alone. 5:5a
- 3) A widow that the church is responsible for is one who is totally focused on salvation by faith. 5:5b
- 4) A widow that the church is responsible is one who is spiritual. 5:5b
- 5) A widow that the church is responsible for is one who is not given to sensual things. 5:6

What is the “list”?

As near as I can determine, from Paul’s context and from O.T. references, “the list” is a list of widows who have vowed not to remarry, but to devote themselves completely to the work of God at the church, thus holding an official position and getting full support (i.e. 5:9, 11-12). For a woman who had previously been married to make some sort of vow or pledge to God was a very serious matter (Num. 30:9).

QUALIFICATION #6 – The age qualification. 5:9a

The church becomes highly accountable to care for a widow once she reaches age 60. Prior to that, she still had a good chance of working and getting married. Several commentators have pointed out that at age 60 the passion level seems to decline a bit, getting one into the elderly years of life.

It has been revealed in history that there were a godly group of ladies who were over 60 who did function in an official capacity for the church. They were authorized by the elders and deacons to give instruction to the younger women as described in Titus 2:3-5 and to put orphaned Christian children into good homes.

Many Christians were dying by persecution and these women saw that their children were well-cared for. According to extra Biblical information of the late first and early second centuries, these women carried out this kind of ministry.

Philip Schaff, the famed church historian, writes: “Deaconesses, or female helpers, had a similar charge of the poor and sick in the female portion of the church. The office was the more needful on account of the rigid separation of the sexes at that day, especially among the Greek and Orientals. It opened to pious women and virgins, and chiefly to widows, a most suitable field for the regular official exercise of their peculiar gifts of self-denying charity and devotion to the welfare of the church. . . .The deaconesses were usually chosen from elderly widows” (Vol. 1, p. 231).

QUALIFICATION #7 – The marital fidelity qualification. **5:9b**

The phrase “the wife of one man” means that the woman being considered for listing and support must have been a one man woman. That is she must have been a woman totally devoted to her husband.

Since Paul wants younger widows to get married (I Tim. 5:14) and in other passages permits second marriages for women (I Cor. 7:39), the phrase cannot mean that a woman must have only been married once. The grammatical emphasis is that the woman must have been a devoted wife.

QUALIFICATION #8 – The good reputation qualification. **5:10**

A widow that is being considered for support must have earned for herself a good name as being a faithful woman of God. Now it is one thing to have a good reputation by one’s own opinion; it is quite another to have a good reputation by Biblical classification. In this verse, God carefully gives us what to look for in identifying a woman who has earned a truly good reputation for good works.

Condition #1 - A widow with a godly reputation will have been one who brought up children.
5:10a

Most commentators agree that this woman will have been one who took good care of her children physically and spiritually. Motherhood is a high and holy calling. God demands that mothers love their children and take good care of their homes (Titus 2:4-5).

Condition #2 - A widow with a godly reputation will have been one who showed hospitality to strangers. **5:10b**

The woman who will have a good reputation before God is one who was willing to open up her heart and home to people she didn’t even know well, if at all. In the ancient world, Christians depended on other Christians for housing when they were traveling.

If a woman was to be cared for by the church, she must have demonstrated that she cared for others. She must have earned a reputation as being one who demonstrated hospitality to strangers.

Condition #3 - A widow with a godly reputation will have been one who washed the saints' feet.
5:10c

A God-honoring woman is one who continually demonstrates that she is willing to do meek, humble and menial jobs for the saints.

Washing feet was not a glamorous job for a woman to do, but it was the kind of job that God took notice of in a woman. Some women like to get all dressed up in order to parade themselves in front of the crowds. Godly women like to serve behind the scenes doing many lowly behind scenes type of jobs.

Condition #4 - A widow with a godly reputation will have been one who assisted those in distress. **5:10d**

A woman God will classify as one with a good reputation will have been one who tries to help those who are under pressure—mentally, physically, or emotionally. She will have spotted those in need and will have done her best to relieve them of some of their distress.

Condition #5 - A widow with a godly reputation will have been one who devoted herself to good works. **5:10e**

The emphasis of the text is that this woman will have continually devoted herself to all types of good works. Two different Greek words are used for “good” in this context. The word “good” used in the first part of **verse 10** refers to external goodness (kalos), whereas the “good” used here refers to internal goodness (agathos).

The widow with a godly reputation in God's sight will be one who is good both externally and internally. She will do good things out of a good heart.

We may observe some key things from this passage:

- 1) Leadership should know the people in the church.
- 2) Leadership should watch over the people in the church.
- 3) Leadership should be able to testify of the facts of widows in the church.
- 4) Women should want these qualities in their lives.
- 5) Widows are to be cared for by the church.

These qualities really should be in all of our lives. We should be loyal, helpful, hospitable, faithful, humble, and devoted to good things. It all begins with a proper relationship with Jesus Christ.