

Message #31

I Timothy 5:11-16

When we read the N.T. epistles and the N.T. pastorals, it becomes very evident that women are vital to God's church. Young and old, married and unmarried, godly women are key to a church becoming a pillar and support of the truth.

The assumption of I Timothy 5 is that if a woman is married, her husband will be working to provide for his family. If a woman is single and unmarried, more than likely she will be able to work and provide for her own needs. However, in the first century, if a woman was widowed and she was older, she did not have many opportunities. For the most part, she couldn't get a job because she was too old, and she likely couldn't find a husband. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the church to take care of its godly older widows.

Now what do you do in a case in which a widow is a younger woman? Should the church provide for the younger widow? Is the church responsible to care for every widow, regardless of age?

The answer to that question is "Yes!" The church is responsible to take care of its widows, but not in the same way. What is right treatment for one may not be the right treatment for another. The proper treatment of an older widow is not the same as the proper treatment for a younger widow.

IF THE CHURCH OF GOD IS TO BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH, IT MUST GIVE PROPER COUNSEL AND INSTRUCTION TO YOUNGER WIDOWS AS TO WHAT THEY SHOULD DO IN LIFE.

When it comes to dealing with people, the church is not to deal with them sentimentally or emotionally, but Biblically. There is a way to deal with older widows and there is a way to deal with younger widows.

J. Vernon McGee said, "I wish that the church could get back to these very basic and simple principles and get away from the sentimental and emotional appeals that we hear instead. We respond to sentimental pleas from unworthy causes which are appealing to our soft hearts and neglect those in our very midst who have real need. We overlook the wonderful widow in our own church who is lonely and seldom visited. Her children have moved away or have died, and she may have physical need. Too often the church ignores such need. But if a church took care of its widows, its testimony would not go unnoticed by the world" (Vol. 5, p. 452).

TOPIC #1 – The command to the church concerning younger widows. 5:11-13

The verb "refuse" is an imperative, meaning it is a command. This is the same verb used by Paul in I Tim. 4:7 translated "have nothing to do with." This is a strong verb which expresses the idea of refusing, declining and avoiding (Smith, p. 340).

The church has been commanded by God to avoid putting younger widows on a list that gives them total support from the church and puts them in official ministry responsibilities in the church.

Reason #1 - Because of her sensual desires. **5:11a**

First, it is normal, natural, and Biblical for a young woman to have sensual desires, especially if she has previously been married. The Greek word is only used here in the N.T. and it refers to sensual desires which war against spiritual desires (Smith, p. 239).

Sex is a big part of marriage and it is a main reason why people get married (I Cor. 7:1-5). To deny this is to deny the Word of God.

Second, sensual desires in women are directly related to the way the “feel.” A woman tends to operate more by feelings.

Reason #2 - Because of a required pledge. **5:11b-12**

Obviously to get on this list of widows, a woman had to make a serious pledge. This was apparently a commitment she made to put Jesus Christ and His church first for the rest of her life, not getting remarried.

This was obviously a very serious vow which God took seriously because if one were to fail to keep the vow, the woman would incur condemnation or judgment. In other words, if a woman were to make a vow before God and then go back on the vow, when she gets before Jesus Christ she will lose rewards for setting aside her promise. God takes vows and promises seriously, when made in the context of His church.

The male leadership in the church has the responsibility to overrule such a decision or vow from a younger widow (Num. 30:9-16).

Reason #3 - Because of an idle life. **5:13**

The word “idle” is the word for inactive and lazy (Smith, p. 57). If a younger widow gets in the habit of going from house to house, she will learn laziness. She will not care for her home or her children and she will be classified by God as a lazy, idle, worthless woman. Notice laziness is learned. A woman is not born lazy; she learns to become lazy.

TOPIC #2 – The charge to the younger widows concerning marriage. **5:14-15**

In this verse Paul clearly sets forth his desire for younger widows—he wants them to get married. The Greek word “want” is one that indicates Paul’s wish is not one based on emotion, but on reason. Paul wants younger widows to remarry. This is quite a contrast from the O.T. law (Lev. 21:14), which actually forbade remarriage of a widowed or divorced woman in certain priestly instances.

I also believe, along with some other commentators, that this is also true for younger women who have been divorced. In fact, the word “widow” is not in this verse. The text simply says younger women. As Dr. John MacArthur writes: “The Scriptures also teach that a woman whose husband has died, or who is the innocent party in a divorce, has the right to remarry” (p. 212).

For example, Paul clearly says if an unbelieving husband or wife deserts or divorces his or her mate, the believer is not bound by any law but has a right to remarry (I Cor. 7:15, 39). A church who puts some legal restriction of celibacy on a younger woman because one marriage has ended, is not being consistent with the whole counsel of God and is in violation of the Word of God.

Want #1 - He wanted younger widows to bear children. **5:14b**

Again the words of Dr. MacArthur are right on here: “The contemporary view that children are an inconvenience that cramps one’s lifestyle is repulsive to the Lord” (p. 213).

God wants younger women to bear children. Children are a blessed gift from Him (Psalm 127:3). It is a blessed privilege for a woman to be entrusted with the life of a child. Woe to the woman who thinks it is God’s will to abort a baby for it is God’s will for her to give life to a baby.

Want #2 - He wanted younger widows to keep house. **5:14c**

Hear this text and hear it well—it is not the job of the husband to stay home and keep house; it is the job of the woman. It is God’s will for a married woman’s life that she stays in the home, raises the children and manages the home. In fact, the word “keep” literally means to be the ruler or master of the household (Smith, p. 312).

Want #3 - He wanted younger women to give Satan no opening for anything. **5:14c-15**

If I understand the context correctly, there are many ways a younger woman can give Satan an opportunity to bring reproach against Jesus Christ:

- 1) Through sensual desire outside of marriage
- 2) Through abandonment of a vowed commitment to Jesus Christ and His Church.
- 3) Through laziness which is totally contrary to God’s Word.
- 4) Through gossip that rips others to shreds.
- 5) Through a life that hates the thought of bearing children.
- 6) Through a lifestyle that does not take good care of the home.

Through all of these ways, a younger woman can give Satan an opportunity for bringing reproach against Jesus Christ and His Church.

TOPIC #3 – The charge to the believing woman concerning widows. **5:16**

Any believing woman who has a widowed mother or grandmother must herself care for her. In fact, any believing woman should keep her eyes open for widows in the church who are “widows indeed” and should try to do what she can to help them.

Any operation or organization of God who takes widows seriously is destined for God’s blessings (i.e. Deut. 14:29). Widows are to be cared for by the church and the people in the church. This is the will of God and the Word of God. If the church will take this responsibility seriously, it will become a pillar and support of the truth.