

# The Family of Faith – Part 2

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs Timothy regarding conflict in the church, especially as related to widows
2. aim – to cause us to seek ways to best treat the most vulnerable in the church, even in conflict
3. passage – 1 Timothy 5:1-16

### b. outline

1. Instructions Regarding Conflict (1 Timothy 5:1-2)
2. Instructions Regarding Widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16)

### c. opening

1. the issue of **benevolence**
  - a. **e.g.** regularly receiving calls asking if the church helps with various financial matters
    1. because the church is *often* helpful to others as a part of its larger outreach ministries
    2. because it is *implied* that the church is supposed to be a place that is generous and helpful, even to outsiders
  - b. benevolence (**i.e.** being well-meaning and kind, being good to others) *is* an essential part of what it means to be a member of the family of God – as God has been generous and kind to us, so we should be towards others, especially those less-fortunate or vulnerable
2. the point of the **chapter**
  - a. Paul is *pivoting* here into more specifically “practical” matters from this point outward
  - b. Paul is addressing various issues of **conflict** within the church
    1. if Timothy does his job, there will rise up (by necessity) **conflict**
    2. so, he gives to Timothy a set of instructions in how to put “*religion into practice*” (**v. 4, NIV**)
  - c. first, Paul addresses the conflict that arises in dealing with someone in the church when he or she has wandered off into error – to approach others and treat others as **family**
  - d. (**now**) Paul addresses a *direct type* of conflict that seems to be common in the early church – the issue of **benevolence**, particularly for the *most vulnerable* in the family-life of the church
    1. **these verses directly address the issue of benevolence in the life of the church, where Paul will put forth a policy to follow within the larger worldview of the church**

## II. Instructions Regarding Widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16)

### Content

#### a. the definition in the policy (v. 3)

1. “*widows*” = women who have lost their husbands in death and are now financially vulnerable
  - a. **note:** in the patriarchal/agrarian culture of the First C. widows were amongst the *most* vulnerable
    1. **i.e.** because of their *absolute* reliance on their husband for their financial support
  - b. so, widow’s needs appear to be a common issue in the church throughout its early history
    1. **Mark 12:38ff:** the widow’s mite used as an example of the failure of Jewish leadership
    2. **Acts 6:** the establishment of deacons to deal with the needs of the non-Jewish widows
    3. **James 1:27:** the definition of “*pure religion*” (**i.e.** spirituality in practice) is taking care of widows
    4. **1 Tim. 5:3ff:** the widow’s needs at Ephesus dealt with directly by **policy**
2. “*truly widows*” = **question:** aren’t all such women *widows* (by definition)? why the *distinction*?
  - a. the *context to follow* answers this question: “*widows*” (in this case) is a specific *subset* of such women who *qualify* for benevolence from the church (**i.e.** not all qualify)
  - b. and, this *qualification* is based on a specific worldview that undergirds Paul’s policy statement
  - c. **note:** GFBC has established a **Benevolence Policy**, much of which is directed by the qualifications established here (**i.e.** to address the requests mentioned above)

#### b. the qualification in the policy (vv. 4-6, 16a)

1. **v. 4** establishes the **general qualification** that Paul applies in this policy:
  - a. a women who has “*children or grandchildren*” is to be taken care of (firstly) by them
    1. as a “*return to their parents*” = as the *natural* outgrowth of the care and nurture that they received in childhood – as the natural “return” due amongst *family*

2. a *qualification* that Paul **repeats** in **v. 16a in reverse** – those who have widows in their families are to take care of them (*i.e.* the **bookends** of the policy suggest this as its core qualification)
  3. the **specific worldview** that undergirds this qualification is found in **v. 8 (see below)**
  2. **vv. 5-6 contrast** those who are “truly a widow” vs. those who are “self-indulgent”
    - a. **IMO:** simply to make a point of where “need” is to be addressed – not to imply that *all younger widows* are basically selfish and self-focused while all older widows are pious and godly
    - b. rather, to contrast those *truly in need* (*i.e.* because they have no other option) vs. those who *have other options (see below)* – to establish a “dividing line” so that the church has a firm policy built on a Christian worldview
  3. **in the church, we are to address need by honoring the implicit value and importance of others as children of God – we are to seek help through humility**
    - a. *i.e.* as flowing out of the Fifth Commandment – honor your father and your mother (**Exo. 20:12**)
      1. which is integral to what it means to have the law written on the heart (**regenerated**)
      2. which is central to the fundamental nature of the nuclear family as God’s good design
    - b. *i.e.* the needs of the vulnerable should *first* be addressed by those designed by God to them
    - c. **principle: taking care of parents (widows or not) is a noble task, and is at the very heart of what it means to trust in God and to recognize how he thinks the world is to operate**
- c. the specifics in the policy (vv. 9-15, 16b)**
1. the **qualifications** of those to be included in the policy that Paul outlines for the church (**vv. 9-10**):
    - a. only those over 60 (**v. 9a**) – those unlikely to remarry or are too old to support themselves
    - b. only those who have demonstrated *fidelity* to their husband (**v. 9b**) – faithful to marriage vows
      1. “the wife of one husband” is similar to the language of **3:2** and **3:12** re: elders and deacons
      2. (**again**) “a one-man woman” = someone who demonstrates (in this most signification human relationship) the concept of fidelity and reputation – *i.e.* does this widow have a reputation for being faithful in marriage? does her marriage represent her commitment to Christ?
      3. **remember:** Paul could have used the word “divorce” here if he intended to limit the policy to those who had never been divorced – his intention here (**like chap. 3**) is probably *broader*
      4. **LOW:** to limit benevolence to those who’s marriages reflect a broader commitment to Christ
    - c. only those who have a reputation for “good works” (**v. 10**) – those committed to a Christian life
      1. “brought up children” = not *necessarily* limiting this to mothers, but to those who have raised children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (*i.e.* as part of the church)
      2. “shown hospitality” = been welcoming and open to others (*i.e.* as in **3:2** for elders)
      3. “washed the feet of the saints” = demonstrated submission to others (**e.g.** Jesus; **John 13**)
      4. “cared for the afflicted” = was *herself* generous towards others (*i.e.* deserving of help)
      5. “devoted herself to every good work” = has a reputation for serving others (*i.e.* earned help)
    - d. **Paul includes in this policy only those who are truly qualified to receive help**
  2. the disqualifications of those *not* to be included in the policy (**vv. 11-15**)
    - a. **note:** it almost seems as though Paul “looks down” on younger widows here, discounting their desire to remarry or making them seem like pagans set on fulfilling selfish desires
      1. **e.g.** in **vv. 11-12**, it seems that Paul equates “desiring to marry” with “abandoning the faith”
      2. **e.g.** in **v. 13**, it seems that Paul believes that younger widows are nothing but “idle gossipers”
    - b. however, it is more likely that Paul is either:
      1. directly addressing *some women* in the church at Ephesus who treat their widowhood as an opportunity for licentious living (esp. at the expense of the church), and/or ...
        - a. apparently some have “already strayed after Satan” (**v. 15**)
      2. indirectly suggesting that it is *possible* for the church to turn some younger widows into this if they “enable” them to it instead of encouraging them to seek their own support
        - a. notice the strong encouragement in **v. 14** for such younger widows to marry
        - b. if they do (which is what they *probably desire anyway*) they can “skirt” the problem of becoming “dependent” upon the entitlement of the church and the temptation to live loosely
    - c. **Paul discludes from this policy those who are able to seek to support themselves**
      1. **LOW:** the church does is not to be “burdened” by those who can support themselves (**v. 16b**)
- d. the worldview over the policy (vv. 7-8)**
1. (**again**) Paul instructs Timothy to “command” these things (**v. 7 cf. as he did in 4:11**) – put these things at the forefront of the church; make sure *everyone understands* these matters
  2. (**here**) Paul gives the **fundamental worldview** that shapes his understanding of this policy (**v. 8**)
    - a. “providing for one’s own household” is a fundamental tenet of a **Christian worldview**
      1. *i.e.* it is key to a *Christian understanding* because to think otherwise is to be “worse than an unbeliever” = to be someone who still thinks like the world or holds the world’s viewpoint

2. Paul repeats this belief re: supporting your family in **2 Thess. 3:10b-12** and **Eph. 4:28**  
*"If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living ... Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need."*
- b. "providing for one's own household" is a key element of the Christian idea of **work**
1. this theological position goes all the way back to Adam at the core of the **Covenant of Works**
    - a. Adam was created to *work* – not just to "work" the Garden (**as in Gen. 2:15**), but to do the work of "*taking dominion*" over all things (**as in Gen. 1:28**)
    - b. Adam was to do the "work" of using all that God had formed to "work out" the *Imago Dei* in himself – to learn, to be creative, to be inventive, to use Creation as a tool to advance himself as a creature in control of all of this "stuff" – to learn about his Creator by examining and using all that had been given to him and to glorify God with the results
    - c. Adam was to *be productive* – unfortunately, at his Fall, this productiveness would be seriously hampered, so that *now* humanity must work just to *survive*
    - d. but, like everything else, through the church, the work of Christ is established to *redeem* everything, including the work of human beings – we are to see work not just as *toil* (**i.e.** post-Fall), but as *vocation* designed to glorify God as we support ourselves (**i.e.** post-Christ)
    - e. **IMO**: Jesus spent 30 years as a carpenter to demonstrate his own commitment to the divine idea of work – as the God-man he worked in this world as Adam was to do, *then* succeeded in overcoming temptation and death where Adam had failed (**i.e.** his *work* to take dominion over all things was *successful*, including even the work of supporting a family)
    - f. **BTW**: which means that even those who "retire" from secular work must still be "working" for the advancement of the cause of Christ through the church
  2. **principle: a Christian worldview sees work as a redeemed aspect of what it means to follow Jesus – we work because we understand its significance to redemption**
    - a. this worldview is what undergirds the Widow's List – those widows who have family or opportunity to support them must choose that route; only those without those options should seek help from the generosity church
    - b. **certainly, the church is to be generous, but that generosity must be within the framework of a proper view of work – how our Benevolence Policy is written**