

Introduction: Is there something *less* than ordained service but *more* than general service for women in the church?

- I. The Order of Servant Widows (1 Tim. 5:3-16)
 - A. Widows who are to be cared for by the church (vv. 3–8)
 1. Inclusion of monetary care (vv. 8 and 16)
 2. Who is a “true widow” for whom the church is to care? (vv. 4–8)
 - a. V. 4-Widows with family are to be cared for by the family
 - b. V. 5-A True Widow
 - c. V. 6—An Illegitimate Widow
 - B. The order of Servant Widows (vv. 9–10)

Three reasons for a list of widows who serve the church:

 1. Why would Paul give Timothy a set of requirements regarding which widows were to receive aid after he had just done so in verses 4 through 8?
 - a. The qualifications in vv. 9–10 are primarily about a proven track record of service to family and church
 2. If vv. 9–10 is referring to women who can receive provision from the church, then that means that a legitimate widow with legitimate needs (according to v. 5) would be forbidden from receiving support from the church if she were under 60 years of age.
 3. The vow of celibacy (implied from vv. 11–12).
 - a. A vow of celibacy is required for the order of widows
 - b. Younger widows should not take this vow but should remarry
 - c. If those on the list were receiving charity, we would expect Paul to encourage remarriage as soon as possible to relieve the financial burden of the church. A vow of celibacy makes no sense whatsoever if the list consisted of widows who were to receive church funds.
- II. Church History Corroborates the Order of Servant Widows
 1. Church history refers to “deaconesses.” Not ordained. But almost every time they are mentioned, the councils cite qualifications which come from 1 Tim 5
 2. “Deaconesses” prepared female baptismal candidates and sometimes baptized them
 3. “Deaconesses” instructed female converts on how to stay holy and uphold their baptism.
 4. Deaconesses visited women in the church to avoid the appearance of evil.
- III. Conclusions
 1. There are only two ordained offices in the church, elder and deacon, and they are limited to men.

2. The Order of Servant Widows was an auxiliary help to the women and the poor in the church.
3. It is very likely that Paul had this “order of widows” in mind by including qualifications for women in 1 Tim 3:11
4. It is very likely that Phoebe was of the order of widows in Rom 16:1, 2

- IV. Why We Need Mothers (Widows and Older Women) of the Church (Titus 2:3–5)
- A. To Serve Wives and Mothers
 - B. To Teach Single Women (Young and Old) to be Self-Controlled and Pure
 - C. To Not Simply Give “Moral Instruction,” but the Gospel