



Message **Transcript**

Caring For Your Spiritual Family

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Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are and for all your doing. Lord, we just ask that you would move mightily during this service. That we would hear you and hear your word faithfully proclaimed so that we would clearly hear what you have to say to us. We want to be changed and transformed into the image of Jesus Christ and we praise you for all that you're going to do. Now, for all who are gathered, who desire to hear the word of the Lord, who will believe what God says about you and will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen?

Amen.

Amen. I don't know if it was because this Thursday was Thanksgiving or what was going on this week, but I heard the F word more times this week than I've really ever heard. It's interesting when you hear that word come out, I mean, it's always said with a lot of emotion. For some people it's said with anger, for others, it's distress, for others, people say that word and there's incredible amounts of pain. But then you see other people say, their eyes like light up like they're almost enjoying saying the word. Like it's a great delight to them. Even as I was listening to people say that word, I even found it slip out of my mouth a couple times this week as we were doing things, and of course I'm talking about the word family, and isn't it interesting that, that word engenders such emotion behind it. No matter who you are, you hear the word family and you begin to think, "Yeah, that's a delightful word. I love that word. I love my family. I'm so glad we got to get together."

Or there's anger behind that word of disappointment that happened in your past and you don't even want to talk about it or there's pain in that word. Some of you this week, even as you gathered with family, all those different emotions begin to come out. For some of you, you would talk about how delightful Thursday was and we got together as family and what a wonderful thing it was. For others, you would tell horror stories about what happened, or maybe you didn't even get together because of what that word means. The reason that that word engenders such emotion is because God loves family. God loves the family. As a matter of fact, when God created the world, he created a man and then a woman and he brought them together so that they could have a family. God has always chosen to use the family as his unit to advance the kingdom of God on this planet. God loves the family. But there's another family that God talks about in his word as well. You see, Jesus Christ came to this world because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

There was no way for any one of us to get to God, so God came to us. Jesus Christ came born of a virgin, fulfilled the law, all the righteous requirements that were demanded of his father. Instead of allowing you to die in your sin while you were still a sinner, Christ died for you by going to the cross, laying down his life on a cross, shed all of his blood so that all of the sin of the world would be taken away. Three days later, he rose victoriously from the grave to offer life to all who would repent and believe in him. When you repent and believe in God, you become a member of his family. The Bible says that you are baptized into the body of Christ. All throughout the New Testament, we see that, when we're part of his body. God is our father, which

makes all of us brothers and sisters, which makes us family. If you look in your Bible in Ephesians Chapter two and verse 19, this is just one verse of many that I could have referenced today talking about family.

Ephesians 2:19 says, so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints inner of God's household. We're family. When you accept Christ, you're family with the body of Christ worldwide. What God wants us to understand is how is family supposed to treat one another? How are we as family supposed to get along? What's supposed to happen? As we've been studying the book of 1 Timothy, we've taken a look as to what's supposed to be going on in the church. If the church is really the embassy for all of God's saints to gather so we can go advance the kingdom and this is kingdom soil on this planet, then what does it look like for those of us in the body of Christ to get along? We've talked about the importance of preaching the word. We've talked about the importance of prayer. We've talked about the importance of leadership. We've talked about gender distinctions. We've talked about a lot of different things that God wants to see happen in his body.

But one thing he wants to make sure we address is how we treat one another. Starting in 1 Timothy Chapter five, he's going to begin to unpack different relationships and how we're to look at those in his word. How we're to treat one another. Jesus said we're to love one another in the same way that he loved us. That the whole law and prophets was summed up by loving God and what? Loving each other. How do we do that? As I look around the world and even in our own church, I think there's ways that we can improve. That we as Christians are not always known for our love for one

another. That's why he goes to great lengths in this section of the scripture to teach us how to do that. I want to invite you to open your Bible to 1 Timothy Chapter five. We're going to take a look at the first 16 verses and unpack some of the relationships today that God wants us to understand how to love each other and how to care for our spiritual family.

Listen to the word of the Lord. He says, do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father. To the younger men, as brothers, the older women as mothers and the younger women as sisters in all purity. Honor widows who are widows indeed. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents for this is acceptable in the sight of God. Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has her hope fixed on God and continues and entreaties in prayers night and day. But she who gives herself to want and pleasure is dead even while she lives. Prescribe these things as well so that they may be above reproach. But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than unbeliever.

A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than 60 years old, having been the wife of one man, having a reputation for good works, and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints feet, if has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work. But refuse to put younger widows on the list for when they feel sensual desires and disregard of Christ, they want to get married. Thus incurring condemnation

because they have set aside their previous pledge. At the same time, they also learn to be idle as they go around from house to house and not merely idle, but also gossips and busy-bodies talking about things not proper to mention. Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house and give the enemy no occasion for approach for some have already turned aside to follow Satan. If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

Here in these 16 verses, we really begin to see what it looks like to care for our spiritual family and how do we care for the relationships in our family, and what does it look like for us to really take the love of Christ and have it lived out in the community that we call the church. We're going to take a look at three primary ways to do this today. The first is this, that caring for your spiritual family means treating everyone with godliness and respect. Treating everyone with godliness and respect. If we're going to care for our Christian family, this is what we're called to do. He's really going to go through four different groups of people, older men, younger men, older women and younger women. This is what he's going to have us do. This is what it wants to look like. This really involves everybody in the church. Here's what he says. He says, do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father.

This word strongly rebuke means to get in his face. It means to be critical. It means to tell him what he's doing wrong. Now, for those of you who don't know, what do men crave more than anything? Respect. Men crave respect. He says, in the

church, don't sharply rebuke in older man, but appeal to him as a father. That means to urge him or exhort him or invite him to come alongside. Some of my best friends in the church are 15 to 20 years older than me. He says, don't rebuke them like that. Don't sharply criticize them, urge them as you were your own dad. Invite them to come alongside, do that because that's how we show respect to older men in the church. Does this mean we're never to rebuke a man? No. I mean, listen to the words of Jesus in John Chapter 17 and ... I'm sorry, Luke Chapter 17 and Verse three. He says, be on your guard. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. Part of our responsibility in the church is to encourage people to walk in holiness.

There are times just because somebody's an older man, it doesn't give him a hall pass to never be rebuked in his sin. It doesn't mean, well, I'm older than you. I can do whatever I want. It means how you're going to approach an older man who is in sin or needs to be talked to is to encourage him, exhort him, appeal to him, come alongside of him as you would your very own father. This is super important for us to understand. Why? Because sometimes in church we're just critical. We can be critical of older men. Do you know why? Because our society teaches us to do so. You study any movie, any comedy out there, any Hollywood film, if you want it to be a blockbuster, make the main character a man who is a total clown or a buffoon. Clark W. Griswold, Al Bundy, Everybody Loves Raymond. I mean, make the guy somebody that you can be critical of or make fun of or be criticizing of. Not in the church. We don't criticize older men. We can call them in their sin. We can exhort them.

We can urge them to live a certain way, but we're not critical. Here's another

thing you should know about older men in the church, especially those who have walked with the Lord for a long time, they are libraries of how to live your life. There's a lot to learn. Not because they've done everything right, but because they haven't done everything right. There's a lot of wisdom in that. He says, when you talk to older men in the church, you say, "Well, what's older?" Older than you. I mean, the older I get, I'm kind of falling into that category now. We're called to exhort them, love them, show honor to them as we're calling them alongside and teaching them. Then he says, to the younger men, as brothers. To the younger men as brothers. How many of you have brothers here? Anybody show of hands. Brothers, we're different. We treat brothers differently. I mean, here at Brave Church, we have a number of people that serve on staff. We have a number of volunteers that serve. I have brother that serves here.

My relationship is different. Try as I might, try as I want to think differently. He's my brother. How would I treat him differently? I'm going to know him for the rest of my life. It's different. Staff may come and go. Elders may come and go. People may come and go. He's my brother. How am I treating him as a brother? As if we're always going to spend time together. Now, why should we treat younger men like this? Listen up, if you're in the family of God, you're going to spend eternity with them. So treat them as if you're going to spend eternity with them. See, sometimes in church, we treat people as if it's only temporary. Like, "I don't like that. I know they're a Christian, but I don't want to hang out with them." You're going to hang out with them for all eternity. "Well, heaven's really big. We'll be on opposite parts of the kingdom." No. We're treating

them as brothers means as brothers, we have to learn to forgive. We have to learn to overlook an offense. We have to learn to bear one another's burdens.

We do things differently if it's brothers. Other people can say something about our brothers. I'm sorry. We can say things about our brothers, but we won't let other people say those things about our brothers. Why? Because they're our brothers. He says, how do you treat those younger than you? It means you're not bossing them and you're not bullying them either. You're coming alongside of them like, "Hey, we're in this thing together." You see it in sports or you watch it with people that have served in the military together or something. There's a bond that gets formed when you're doing something special together. There's a brotherhood. We're in the business of advancing Christ's kingdom on this planet. We're not better than anybody else in the church. We treat older men with respect. We appeal to them. We come along those that are younger and we encourage them to walk with Christ too. Because why? Because we're brothers, we're family. We're family. We're truly a spiritual family. Then he tells us how to treat the women.

He says, older women as mothers. It was interesting this week on a text thread I got, my parents were going through some old pictures and so a couple of the pictures that came through were pictures of me and my mom when I was under the age of one. There was one picture of my mom holding me when I was about less than two weeks old. I'm looking at my mom and not only was I looking at me like, "Wow. You were little." I was looking at my mom and like, "Wow. She was young." I mean, but I was looking at my mom and I was looking at her face and she was looking down at me the

way I saw my wife look down at our kids when she had first delivered them. There was this love and this respect and she's trying to hold my head up just right and she's so proud of who her son is. I think it's arguable that the most significant relationship in a child's life from the time they're born for a period of time is their mom.

It's their mom. We should treat older women as mothers. How do we treat them? With respect, with honor, with gratefulness, thankful for who they are and what they're doing. Older women in the church should feel honored for who they are and how they live and what they've done. We should show respect there as well. Amen. That's what he wants us to do so that women in the church know that they're genuinely cared for and that they're valuable in the church and they have significance to pass on to those who are younger. Then he gets to the younger women. He says, younger women as sisters. Then he adds this, in all purity. Younger women as sisters in all purity. I happen to have two sisters. Both my sisters are married now. They have husbands that take good care of them. They don't need me in their life. But how do we treat someone as a sister? It means that we protect them and care for them. It means we're looking out for them.

It's what we do. Now, my sisters don't call me and ever ask for help, but if they did and said, "Hey Jeff, I just need you. Be my brother right now." I'm there. Because why? Because it's my sister. We grew up in the same family. There's a special kindred. There's a special relationship. How should younger women in the church be treated by people? As sisters, as family. Now, he inserts this word because he's talking to Timothy who's going to be spending time with younger women. It's really

interesting because when you read through Titus Chapter two, when Paul's instructing Titus and telling him about all the different people in the church, the only one he doesn't tell him specifically to spend time with is younger women. This is free of charge. Older men are not to spend time discipling younger women. Did you know that? That's a responsibility for older women to disciple younger women. But men are called to be sisters with and love and protect the younger women how? In all purity. What does that mean?

It means that there's no woman in the church that should ever question or wonder why this man is looking out for her. It should always be above board. It should always be above approach. There shouldn't be any funny business to it. Why? Because I'm not here to disciple you, I'm not here to be your best friend, but I do love you. I do care for you. I want to put you in touch with the right people, and it's in all purity. It's sincere. So that younger girls in the church can feel like, out of all the places that I go, I feel the most protected, cared for and loved here. I feel the most honored here. This is where I feel the most respect here. This is where I'm treated with all purity, here. That's how we're to treat all people in the body of Christ. Did you know that? Older men with respect, younger women or younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters.

Why? Because we're family. We're family. I've been a Christian now for, I think, almost over 30 years. Time just keeps flying. I'm closer to some of you here than I am to my own family. Because why? Because of the bond we share in Christ and because

of the depths of conversation that we have. I love my family. Family's a good word for me. I love my dad. I love my mom. I love my sisters, and most of the time I love my brother. I do love him. At the end of the day, I mean, family's a good word for me. But there's a special kinder that goes on in the body of Christ when we share the same father in a deeper way. That we're family and God wants us all to treat each other that way. Why? Because this is a family that Christ died for. He loves his family. Christ protects his family. This is his house. How we treat one another is really, really important. You say, "Well, why do I need to know all that?"

Because you're going to come in contact with older men and younger men and older women and younger women, and God wants you to understand this is how you treat them. This is how you interact with them. Because he wants to be honored within his church. Amen. Caring for our spiritual family involves treating everyone in godliness and with respect. We're going to be godly with every single person and we're going to respect every single person because that's what it means to be part of the family of God. There's all sorts of other things we could talk about this. We could talk about referencing one another. We could talk about considering others more important than ourselves. There's all sorts of ways we treat one another, but in the church we should feel palpably this is the place where I feel the most love of any place I go on the planet. It shouldn't just feel that way at Brave Church, it should feel that way in any church I walk into because we share the same God through Jesus Christ I feel loved here.

I love walking into a place, whether it's here, whether it's in a different state,

whether it's around the world with these people that love Jesus and you walk in and I feel like this is my family. These are my people. I've had that experience all around the world, and this is how we do it. Caring for your spiritual family means treating everyone with godliness and respect. Second is this, caring for your spiritual family means showing compassion and providing financial help when needed. Showing compassion and providing financial help when needed. Notice what he says, honor widows who are widows indeed. It means honor widows who are truly widows. You say, "Well, what's a widow?" A widow is somebody whose husband has died. That's what a widow is by definition, but it's not limited to that. It can also involve a woman who is married, who is dealing with bereavement or being left alone or having suffered loss because of not just death, but maybe divorce, maybe desertion, maybe imprisonment.

Where this woman is married to a man but that man is no longer there and she's by herself and she's hurting. When I say the word widow, I'm not just talking about someone who's husband has died. In our culture it could be single moms, which is becoming an epidemic or pandemic. Because in our culture, the number one problem we have is men not stepping up and being Godly and taking responsibility. It impacts everything in a negative way when a man doesn't do that. What do we do? How do we show compassion and provide financial help? Now, first of all, we have to decide, does God even care about this? Because it's interesting to me that in a book on the church, these many texts, this much scripture is dedicated to widows. Why would God spend this much time on this topic? Any idea? Because he cares about widows, because he loves widows. God has always cared for the marginalized. There's two groups of

people God really cares for, and it's widows and orphans.

In James chapter 1:27, here's what he says, pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world. Live holy and then take care of two groups of people. Who? Orphans and widows. Why? Because they can't take care of themselves. The church needs to be very responsible for taking care of both of those groups of people. Did Jesus care about kids? I mean, all throughout the scriptures, the disciples are shooing them away. He's like, "No, no, no, no, no, no. Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." What did he say? He said, in this world, sinful things happen, but woe to one of you who causes one of these little ones to sin. I tell you the truth, it'd be better for you to take a millstone and go hang it around your neck and be thrown in the sea than to cause one of these little ones to sin.

What was he saying? I care about kids and I care about how you're treating kids and I care about what happens to kids. Yeah, bad things are going to happen in this world, but woe to you if you're causing one of these little ones to stumble. I care about kids. Does Jesus care about kids?

Yes.

Yes he does. We don't just do kids church or kids babysitting, we do kids ministry. Because Jesus cares about all our kids and he wants to have a relationship with all our kids, and he wants our kids to grow up in the faith and know him. He wants

our kids to be part of a church where ongoing relationships look like this because he cares about kids. What else does he care about? Does he care about widows? It's not rhetorical. I got to make sure we're on the same page. Does Jesus care about widows?

Yes.

Yes. Thank you. He really does. It's interesting. In the early church, one of the first challenges that they faced was a crisis with the widows. The widows weren't getting enough food to eat. One group was getting more food and the other group was getting left out. They called the church together and they said to appoint seven men filled with the spirit to take care of the food distribution problem to the widows, because it was super important, but the apostles needed to continue to preach and pray. They were dealing with a widow issue. Three chapters later, in Acts Chapter nine, there was a woman named Tabitha who's name in Greek is Dorcas. She made cloths and doing all these things. She was a widow. She fell dead. She died. They sent for Peter and said, "Come pray for her." He came and prayed for her, knelt down by her bedside and said, "Tabitha, arise." She got up, gave Peter her hand and he stood her up and all the widows were cheering.

Why did God raise Tabitha? Why did he raise her from the dead? Because the widows were in need of people that we're taking care of them. It bereaved them so much to lose somebody else. Does he care about widows? Yes he does. He cares about the widows. Should the church care about widows? Absolutely, because we should care about everything that Jesus Christ cares about. That's why he's devoting

this much time to this much scripture. It's really interesting because even on the cross, if you study the four gospels and you see Jesus, when he's having conversation on the cross, we see him talking to his father, father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing and into your hands I commit my spirit. But we really only see him having conversation with a couple different people. Remember. One conversation he had was with a thief to his side. Throughout the day, both thieves were mocking him saying he calls himself the son of God he can't even save himself.

But at the end of the day, one of the thieves decided like, "Hey, why are we mocking him? He didn't do anything wrong. We're the ones that have done wrong." The thief says to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." What does Jesus say, truly, truly I say to you today, you'll be with me in paradise. What's he having a conversation about on the cross? The gospel. Does Jesus care about the gospel? He cares about the gospel so much that during his entire earthly ministry, he talked about it to the point of his death. The gospel is this, that God loved you so much that he sent his only begotten son that so whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life. As long as you're breathing, God wants you to know he loves you with an unconditional love, that your sins can be completely forgiven, that you don't need to go to hell, that you don't need to be separated from God, and you can be in a relationship with him through repentance and faith.

Repentance means, I'm turning from my sin. Faith means, I'm trusting Jesus Christ alone to forgive them. That's what it means. When you do that, you're part of his family. Jesus had conversation on the cross about that. You know what the second

conversation was? You know what it was about? It was about widows. It was about widows. It's often overlooked, but in John Chapter 19, as Jesus is dying on the cross, starting in verse 25, it says, but standing by the cross of Jesus where his mother and his mother's sister Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. Where was Joseph? Don't know. Seemingly he's probably dead at this time. He's not there to take care of his mother. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother."

From that hour, the disciple took her into his own household. Who did Jesus care about? His widowed mom. He said to his beloved disciple, "Hey, take care of her." From that moment on, he took Mary into his own house and took care of her. Two conversations on the cross. One about the gospel, one about widows. Does Jesus care about widows?

Yes.

That's why there's so much written about this. Because God cares about women who have been widowed, that the church would take care of them because Jesus Christ loves them and wants them to be taken care of. Amen. That's why there's so much. He says, honor widows who are widows indeed. Honor widows who are truly widows. Now, what does it mean to truly be a widow? How do I qualify? He's going to talk about three different types and who we're to give our attention to. See if you can hear them. Verse four, but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first

learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents for this is acceptable in the sight of God. This is called the fortunate widow. I call it the fortunate widow. Why? Because she has family who can take care of her. What does this mean? It means if you have someone in your family who has been widowed, it is your responsibility as a family to take care of the widow.

Even in the 10 commandments, one of the 10 commandments is honor your father and mother. What does it mean to honor? Honor doesn't mean showing respect. Honor means at times giving financial support where needed. Listen closely, it means if your parents are aging and the dad dies, whose responsibility is it to take care of your mom? Yours. She's fortunate because you're going to do that. The Pharisees turned all this stuff around. That's why Jesus had a problem with them. Jesus talked to the Pharisees and says, woe to you, you twist everything for your religious purposes. You say whatever would've been given to you to the widows, we've given to God. We call it corban. In other words, they were saying, "Well, mom, we would've helped you out. We know you're a widow, but we're really spiritual so we're going to give our money and our tithe to the church." Jesus says, "That's ridiculous. It's better to take care of your own family." You say, "Well, Pastor Jeff, if my mom becomes a widow and I'm taking care of her, I can't tithe."

Good. Take care of your mom first. It's your responsibility. Why? Because she's the one that took care of you. She's the one that held you. She's the one that provided for you. If the day comes where she can't take care of herself, whose job is it to take care of her? It's yours. That's a family responsibility. How fortunate you are if you're a

widow that has family that will take care of you. Why would you say that? Well, God says, that's how you learn piety. That's how you learn how to practice what's being preached. You practice what you preach by taking care of your own family. In regard to their parents, it's acceptable in the sight of God. In other words, it's not the church's job to take care of your mom if you can take care of your mom. You say, "That's a pretty big expense." So were you. Amen. I mean, let's be clear, as Christians, this is what we do. This is what we do. Then there's a second widow, I call this the true widow or the lonely widow. Notice her.

Now she who is a widow indeed, the true widow, and who has been left alone has fix her hope on God and continues and entreaties and prayers night and day. You say, "Well, what's the true widow?" A true widow has nobody to take care of her. But we know that she loves the Lord because she's known for her prayer life, and she's seeking the Lord and she's not demanding help and she's not blaming God for her circumstances. She's constantly in prayer. Her faith is known to others. This is the true widow. This is a woman who loves the Lord who has been bereaved because her husband is longer there. She's not blaming God. She's not blaming the church. She's not demanding the church takes care of her. Here's how she's known. She's known for her prayer life, her trust in the Lord. I know God's going to take care of me. That's a widow that we, as a church, have to get behind.

That's who we have to support. Somebody that has no support outside of our church, we have take care of her. That's what the Bible says. Then there's a third widow, I call this the worldly widow. It says this, but she who gives herself to want and

pleasure is dead even while she lives. There's one word here that describes wants and pleasure. It really means to live indulgently or luxuriously or to live excessively or to live for comfort. Here's what it's saying about this widow. This widow is dead even while she lives. What does that mean? It means she's spiritually dead even though she lives. It means this widow is not a Christian. This woman just wants to get money to live her indulgent, self-centered lifestyle. She's not even a Christian. We, as a church, aren't called to take care of her. You say, "Well, how do you know she lives like that?" Because it's pretty obvious. She wants to take money and spend her money on her own things. She doesn't want Jesus. She's not seeking Jesus.

Those are the three different types of women. The pleasure seeking, lost women that we don't help. The fortunate widow that has family that can help her that we don't help. But then there's this lonely widow, this true widow. Did Jesus care about the widows? He notices everything about widows. If you're a widow, he loves you. It's interesting to me that on one occasion while Jesus was watching all the rich people put their money in the offering and all this great stuff, there was one widow that brought in two small copper coins, less than a penny. When she dropped those in, Jesus stood up from where he was and told all his disciples, he goes, "I tell you the truth. That's what I'm talking about. Because this woman gave more than all the others combined because she out of her poverty put in everything all she had to live on." In other words, here's a true widow. This is somebody that has no other means of support. She has no husband, no family, nobody to take care of her.

What is she doing? She's saying, "God, I trust you with what little I have. Here

you go." He's like, "That's what I'm talking about. That's who my heart goes out to." Jesus says. In the church, that's who our heart needs to go out to as well. Those are the situations that we have. We need to show compassion and we need to provide financial help for that when needed. Now, what does God tell us about this? He says, "Prescribe these things as well so that they may be above reproach." Prescribe these things so that who may be above reproach? Everybody. So that we as a church may be above reproach. That we know the three different kinds of widows and who we're going to get behind. So that widows will know, Hey, this is the kind of widow that we're going to get behind. It means command and teach these things. I've been a Christian for 30 years. I've never heard anybody preach a sermon on this. We're commanded to teach our people who we're supposed to behind and take care of. The lonely true widow indeed is who God wants us to do.

He says, command these distinctions. Why? So that widows know how to live. So that families know how to provide for widows and so the church knows how to properly show compassion to the right ones. We need to know how to do that because we're stewarding this for the Lord. Amen. We want to give a good account to the Lord for how we stewarded his resources. Then in verse eight, it says this, but if anyone does not provide for his own and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than unbeliever. You say, "What does that mean?" It means this. Just humor me a little bit. Raise your hand today if you're married and you or your spouse is under the age of 60. You're married and one of you is under the age of 60. Now keep your hands up. Keep your hand up if you think there's a possibility that

somebody holding up their hand may not make it to 85. There's a possibility. You can put your hands down. That's why we take care of widows.

You might say, "Well, that's never going to happen to my wife. I'm going to live forever." Well, you're not going to live forever and we better know how we're going to take things. Because the Bible says, in the context of widows, if you don't know how to take care of your own family, you're worse than a non-believer. It means your witness to the world is worse than a non-believer because non-believers know how to take care of their own family. People in the church are family and we're called to take care of them. You say, you know Christ. So for Christ's sake, take care of your family. There's a great pause here. How come he doesn't talk about widowers? Because we have Godly men in our church who have lost their spouse. We have Godly men in our church whose wives haven't been Christians who have left them. Why isn't he talking about men? Because men, your number one job is to provide and protect your family. Men, if you lose your wife and you don't have means, here's what God would tell you, get a job.

That's what he says. Men are to provide and protect. Now I know we have gender confusion in our culture, but gender is so much bigger than just being two genders of men and women and marriage only between a man and a woman. Gender is how we're to live our lives. Men are called to work and provide. What does that mean? That means this. If my wife called me and said, "Hey Jeff, I have an opportunity and I can make a million dollars a year doing this." Here's my response, "That doesn't

matter. That doesn't change my calling. That doesn't change who I am. Our family's not built around money, it's built around me honoring the Lord by providing and protecting my family. You can just say no to that job." Now I'm making up a faulty illustration, but some of you are feeling conviction. The reason you're feeling conviction is because God designed men to work, not have a sugar mama. That's why he's talking about widows. It's clear in the text, isn't it? Nothing's changed. God's word is true. He's not changing his word.

That's why he's telling us to do this. Now, listen, I never thought I'd talk about this in church, but I'm going to talk about this and I'll make it real practical for you. Men, if you're married and here's a couple practical things that you can begin to do. Number one, you should have a will. You should have a will. You may not die for a long time, but I promise you you're going to die. You want to have a will in place dictating where your assets are going to go, how your kids are going to be stewarded, all those different things. That's important. There's something else that we have in our generation that they didn't have in the first century, it's called this. It's called life insurance. Get some. You say, "How much do I need?" I used to sell it. By the way, I'm not getting any commission for life insurance, just so you know. I got out of life insurance business, got in a life assurance business. I prefer that. But listen, some people say about seven to 10 times your income.

You say, "Well, how do I know if I have enough?" Talk to a trusted financial advisor. Ask them. Better yet, ask your wife. Ask your wife. Say, "If I were to die, this is what you'd get. Do you feel good about that?" Because she'll probably say, "That's

it?" I mean, you want to take care of her. If you got kids going to college and you got a home to pay for, don't let the church assume your a financial burden because you didn't have the responsibility to get some life insurance. If you're healthy, it's not that expensive, you can just get some. It's important that you have some. For those guys are, "Well, I don't want to leave ... I don't want my wife to be rich. I mean, she'll get remarried or something. I don't want to leave her all this money." It's not true. It's not true.

I just upped my insurance recently and I was talking to my wife and we were kind of walking through like, "If something happened to me, this is what you'd have. You'd probably be better off without me." I was waiting for a response, and she did thankfully, and she said, "No amount of money would ever replace you." She go, "I don't want to lump sum of cash. I want you." That's great, but I'm telling you during a bereavement process, it'd be nice to know that you're not scrambling trying to figure out how to sell your house and where your kids are going to live and how you're going to do ... Guys take care of your wife. Take care of your wife. I mean, that's a responsibility that we have as men and it's something that we can all do and we can steward. Why? Because listen to this verse again, but if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

You want to leave a good testimony, put these things in place. Take care of your wife now and even after you would be gone. It's so important that we do this because we need to take care of our families. That's our responsibility as men in the home.

Then 30 says this, not only do we need to treat people right with respect and with honor and godliness because they're our family and we need to show compassion and give financial help where needed. But then he's going to help us understand how do we discern who gets what and how do we do all this? Caring for our spiritual family must involve demonstrating wisdom in your stewardship for the purpose of your witness. Demonstrating wisdom in your stewardship for your witness. You're going to ask the question, "Well, who do we give to and how much do we give to and how do we do this whole process?"

God says, "I'm glad you asked. I have an answer for that." He says a widow is to be put on the list if she is not less than 60 years old, having been the wife of one man, having a reputation for good works, and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work. Now what's the list. The list seems to be this ongoing support that this woman is going to receive from the church. It doesn't mean if she's under 60 and she's widowed and has nobody to take care of her, we say, "You know what? You're 40. Wait 20 years and we'll throw you a bone." I mean, that's not what it means. It means if somebody's going to be put on this regular list of receiving regular ongoing support from the church, here's the requirements. She's got to meet these requirements.

Now, why is this important for us to understand as Christians? Because for better or for worse as Christians, we feel bleeding hearts toward people in need and sometimes we want to throw money at them thinking it's going to solve it. I want to tell

you something, money will not solve a spiritual problem. It won't solve a spiritual problem. We have people that'll come into our church from time to time and they'll say stuff like this, "I need \$750. I need it by Monday because if I don't have it by Monday on Tuesday, they're kicking me out of my apartment." There's something in us that says, "We got to give them the \$750. They're going to get kicked out of their apartment." That's good that you feel that way, but I'm telling you the \$750 is not their problem. They had a problem long before they even signed the lease on that apartment. If we don't deal with the means of why we got there spiritually, no amount of money is ever going to help them.

As a matter of fact, they'll be a returning customer next month for another \$750. Because, just because you're a widow, it doesn't mean, "Hey, where's my paycheck?" He gives requirements that we would put someone on an ongoing list that meets certain requirements. Isn't it interesting? There's integrity requirements for elders, there's integrity requirements for deacons and those that are going to serve, and there's integrity requirements for those that are going to receive money from the church. You say, "Well, what is it?" One, she's got to be at least 60 years of age. Why? Because in that time and in that culture, they really believed that 60 was an age where people moved from activity to contemplation. It's also an age where some people believed that sexual desire is beginning to wane. That doesn't mean that you can't get married or remarried if you're over 60. I know people in their 70s and 80s, and even saw a story of a woman in her 90s recently that got married. That's fine. But the norm would be, many women that have lost their husbands 60 above would

choose, "I'm just going to be single."

She's going to be put on the list, she's got to be at least 60. She must be known as a one woman man or a one man woman in this case. It's kind of the same as what it is for elders. She was known for the love of her husband. You say, "Well, how do you know that?" By watching her and by watching him. In the same way that our wives faces are billboards to us and to all of you for how you're treating her, men's faces are often time a billboard to how their wife is treating them. She would be known as somebody that was good to her husband. She was known as, "He's my man and he's my only man." Everybody knows that she only cared about him. It doesn't necessarily mean that maybe she was young and 23 and was widowed at 23, got remarried at 27. Now she's 62 and her husband's died. It doesn't mean she's never been married more than once. It just means when you see her relationship when she was married, she was known for the love of that one man.

That's what it means. This is why he's given this requirement. She's above 60, she's known for being the wife of one man. Notice this reputation that she has. She's got a Godly reputation. He goes through this list and this reputation for good works. I mean, hear this. She's helping out with all sorts of different things. She's got a reputation for good works and if she has brought up children. She's helped with kids. You say, "Well, what if she wasn't able to have kids?" That's okay. I guarantee you she's probably helped some other mom with her kids. I guarantee you she's probably helped kids in the church. I guarantee you she's probably helped her neighbor with their

kids. She's known for her love for kids. She's helped with kids. What else is she? She's shown hospitality to strangers. That means she welcomes anybody. She's not some highfalutin woman that only hangs out with her little elitist class in her own mind.

No, she welcomes everybody. She's known by her love for Christ. She's known that she has washed the saints feet. Now, what does that mean? In the first century, people needed their feet washed all the time because they didn't have shoes like us. They wore sandals or went barefoot oftentimes and were outside on dusty muddy roads. When they entered a house, it was the job of a slave to wash the feet of the person coming in the home. Here's what this woman is known for. Nothing's beneath her. She'll take the job of a slave, no problem. She's a servant. That's how she's known. People see her, they're like, "Yeah, that woman serves. She serves the body of Christ. She serves women. She's a servant of the first rank." What else does it say about her? It says, if she's assisted those in distress, when she sees a need, she fills it. She doesn't just turn a blind eye to it. She doesn't just call her friends like, "One of you need to take care of that." She sees people in distress and she's there for them.

She comforts them. If she has devoted herself to every good work. She's a servant. She's a servant. Single guys in here, free advice, if you want to meet the right woman, find a servant. Find a servant. It's interesting for me when I read through the Old Testament and Isaac met Rebecca at the troughs and the well. She ended up feeding and servicing all of his camels with water and doing all that. She was a servant. Isaac married Rebecca the same day. When you find a woman who is serving the Lord like that, you found someone good. Find a woman that's a servant. That's a

requirement for being put on the ongoing list of support from the church. Why is this so important that we see this? Because our bleeding hearts will want us to do things for other people that don't meet the requirements. He tells us we need to do this for people in the church. Galatians 6:10 says, so then while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are the household of faith.

Take care of people, especially in the family of God. But it's really interesting, he doesn't tell us just to take care of anybody. If you flip back one book to 2 Thessalonians Chapter three, you'll see how the apostle Paul, when he went to Thessalonica treated the people and what he expected from them. 2 Thessalonians Chapter three, starting in verse seven, he says, for you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example because we not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it. But with labor and hardship, we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you. Not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you so that you would follow our example.

Paul say, "When I went to Thessalonica, we worked for our food. We could have asked for an honorarium, there wouldn't have been anything wrong with that, but we wanted to provide an example for you of what work looked like so that we were earning our way through the church so we were not being a burden to any of you. We're hoping that you would follow our example, that the church is not just responsible for doling out funds. That the church is responsible as a body that we take care of Christ's church, and we do everything we can to serve it well." He says, "For even

when we were with you, we used to give this order." Well, what order did you give? If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat. What's it mean? Get a job. It's not the church's job to take care of you. If you don't work, then you shouldn't eat. If you have the ability to work, if you can find work.

Now, not that you're holding out for some management position for 10 years while you're playing video games in your parents' basement. Men, you're called to work. He's not just going to talk about women and widows here, he's talking about men. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busy-bodies. Now, such persons, we command and exhort in the Lord, Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and to eat their own bread. Get a job and take care of yourself and your family. That's what he's saying. Quit being idle and being a busy-body and being a gossip. That's what he says. That's why we have to have understanding for who is it we're going to support. What's the kind of widow that we get behind and what's the kind that we get behind on an ongoing basis? What requirements does she meet? Who is she in the church? Then he says this, "Well, what about younger widows?" "I'm a widow or my husband divorced me. What about me? I'm not 60 yet. What about me?"

I'm glad you ask. He said, "But refuse to put younger widows on the list for when they feel sensual desires and disregard of Christ, they will want to get married. Thus incurring condemnation because they have set aside their previous pledge." Apparently when women were in the bereavement process, some of them were making a pledge of, "I'll never get married again." My wife has told me if something happened to you, I'd

never get married again. I tell her, "Don't make that vow. You may want to reconsider it someday." I mean, you just may. When you go through a period of bereavement, there's all sorts of things that you can start making promises to. Here's what's true, God takes vows very seriously. Don't make a promise that I'm never going to get married again unless God tells you to make a promise that you're never going to get married again. Then don't get married.

He says, "What's happening ..." and he goes, "what I see in the church is some of these younger women who are like fine, I'll just never get married again. What happens is, even though they've made a vow to God that they're not going to get married. Mr. Shining, wonderful guy, Christian guy comes along and now all of a sudden they're like, I know I said I wasn't going to get married, but I didn't know he existed. I want to get married now." He's saying, "Now you're taking your vow and you said you weren't going to get married, but now you want to get married, so don't make the vow not to get married." He says, "Let them get married. Don't put them on the list. Don't make them take a vow that they're going to stay single for the rest of their lives." He goes on to say, this at the same time, they also learn to be idle. Meaning, if you give younger women just ongoing money and say, "Don't worry about it. The church will just take care of you."

Here's what Paul's experience was, at the same time, they learn to be idle and they go around from house. Not merely idle, but also gossips and busy-bodies talking about things, not proper to mention. By the way, when you just hand out money to

people with no responsibility, that's exactly what happens. If they have no responsibility and you're just giving them money, and here's what he says, "Here's what I notice with these young widows. If you just give them money, they're like, great. I got all this money and they sit around idle and they go from house to house and they're just busy-bodies and gossips." It's not because of their gender, because we just read in 2 Thessalonians 3 that men will do the same thing. It's because they've been given money to sit and do nothing and they're not taking responsibility. You say, "Well, then what are we supposed to do with these young women who are Godly?" Paul answers. He goes, "Therefore I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house and give the enemy no occasion for reproach. For some have already turned aside to following Satan."

He says, "What's your encouragement then for the younger women?" What is it? Get married. Get married, stay busy. If you have a desire to get married, get married. If you've lost your husband at some point in time, when you're done grieving him, get married. If you still have a desire to have kids, have kids. Get married, take care of your home, take care of your house. Why is that important? Because he says, "You know what? It's great because then some guy can come along and take care of you and you're not burdening the church with your financial responsibility. You're going to be happier if you're married than if you're 35 years old and you know your whole lot in life is just to take a handout from the church just to get by for the next however many years." He encourages young women to get married. Then he circles this entire argument that he's been making from the beginning. He says, "If any woman who is a

believer has dependent widow, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened so that it may assist those who are widows indeed."

In other words, he's saying the very same thing that he was saying. If you can take care of widows yourself, take care of them. See, we have this easy switch that we think it's the church's job, the government's job, the educator's job, somebody else's job. Sometimes we're in a small group, have you ever noticed this? Somebody will voice a prayer request that they have a need, maybe a financial need, maybe a time need, and what do we say? Let's pray for that. Rather than, "I'll give you my time and I'll give you my money." We don't need to pray about that. I got what you need. Here's why we don't do that. Because we don't want to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. When we think about widows in our culture, what do we think? Well, that's the church's job. They should come up with a benevolence fund for that. Just doll out money. Yes, to a point. But how about your money? How about your time? How about your effort? How about your energy?

Because God wants us to treat everyone that way. Older women, with what? Respect as mothers. Younger women, what? As sisters in all purity. That's how we're to treat one another. When we see a need, it's not, "Well, I better call the church. They better take care of this." No, I see a need and I'm going to take care of it. My mom will never be a burden to the church. Why? Because I'm going to take care of it. My mom will never be a burden to a church because my dad took care of it. You understand? That's what we're called to do. When we see a need, we get involved. You say, "Well, that'll take some of my money." Yeah, it will. What's the purpose of money? It's not so

that and accumulate a bunch so you can live on easy street. God gave you everything you have for resources to help advance his kingdom on the planet. We'll be held accountable to that. Now, like I said, I've never heard a message on this.

You said, "Well, that's not why I came to church today. I didn't come to hear about how we treat widows and how we treat other people in church." But isn't important that we know this? Isn't important that we as a church can rally behind what God wants us to rally behind? Because why? Because when we rally behind what God wants us to rally behind, we have a witness to the world that's special. Because when other people say, "Well, that's a place, whether you're a male or a female, you can go and you're going to experience incredible amounts of love. That's a place where you can go where people will treat you with dignity and respect. That's a place can go they'll treat you with all godliness. That's a place you can go that if you have a genuine need and you're walking with the Lord, they're going to take care of you." That's a witness to the world.

See, when we don't do that, here's what people say, "Yeah. Those Christians talk big about how God loves them. But my mom, this happened to her, my sister, this happened to her. They didn't do a darn thing to help." That's not a good witness. Our witness is we're going to love people like Christ loves people, we're going to honor people like Christ honors people, and we're going to do our part individually and as a church to glorify his name because our Lord is great and awesome and mighty. Amen.

Amen.

That's who our God is and that's how we're called to treat our family. Would you stand with me as we pray? Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are today. Lord, may we be convicted about how we need to treat people in our body. Older men, younger men, older women, younger women and widows. Lord, may we do our part both individually and as a church to honor you, to glorify you so that our witness to the world would say that Jesus Christ is Lord. For you are great and you are good and you're awesome. Lord, we love you and we bless you and we praise you in the mighty and the righteous name of Jesus. All God's people said, amen. Can we give God praise this morning for his word?