

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of **U DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5



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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- What's a sacrificial loving act you've made for a family member?
Would you have done that same thing for a stranger? Why or why not?
- Review what we learned about the care of widows (see Sermon Summary). How does it strike you?
Let's consider options for the needy. Read Ruth 1:1-9, 14-18, 22; 2:2, 17-19. Summarize the details. Is this a humane and dignified option for those who cannot live independently? Why or why not?
Read Acts 6:1-7. Summarize the details. How does this situation differ from that of Naomi and Ruth? Is **this** a humane and dignified option for those who cannot live independently? Why or why not?
Have you ever heard of a church taking care of its widows to a similar degree? Tell us about it.
- Would you be willing to let a destitute TCCer live with you long-term? Why or why not?
Would you ever consider becoming a foster parent? Why or why not?
What needs exist in the TCC community?



Application-Challenge

- Remember that the church really is a family—so relate to older men as we would to our father, older women as we would our mother, and our peers as our brothers and sisters.
- Take seriously your responsibility to care for those members of our church and physical family who are the most vulnerable—widows, orphans, and aging parents.
- Work hard and get your financial house in order. Meeting the needs of your family require it. You need a savings plan, a giving plan, and a living plan.
- If you would like to know God personally, contact us at <connect.tcc.org>. Scroll down to the Ministry Information Request section and mark the first or second checkbox. We look forward to helping!

Sermon Summary

In 1 Timothy 5 Paul gives Timothy guidelines for how he is to relate to various members of the church, with a special emphasis on widows. Church leaders should treat those they lead as they would members of their own family: their elders with respect, affection, and gentleness; their own generation with equality; and the opposite sex with self-control and purity (vv. 1-2). For Timothy, being a relatively young pastor, this was a particularly delicate assignment, especially when confronting older members of the congregation. First Paul tells him what not to do. He says, “Do not sharply rebuke an older man...(v.1). The word translated here as “sharply rebuke” literally means “to strike with blows.” Used figuratively, as it is here, it means “to smite with words” rather than with fists. One of the greatest failings of those involved in pastoral work is their failure to get along with people. You can be great in the pulpit, but if you can’t get along with people, you are not going to be a very effective leader. Paul offers some additional advice to Timothy with respect to how to relate to young women in the church. “Treat the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity” (v. 2). This is more than just a warning against acts of immorality, although it includes that. It is a warning against any kind of impropriety. That is good advice, not just for pastors, but for all of us who seek to glorify God in our church-family relationships.

Paul continues in verses 3-16 to address another segment of the church who requires special attention. He is especially concerned about widows. He opens his discourse on the treatment of widows with the simple command to honor or assign high value to them. Paul is merely reflecting the teaching of the Old Testament. Throughout the Bible, justice and love are demanded for widows and orphans. God is frequently described as ‘a father to the fatherless’ and ‘a defender of widows’ (Exodus 22:22-24, Deuteronomy 27:18). And of course, Jesus was consistently compassionate towards widows. And so it makes sense that Paul would open his comments by reminding Timothy of the special place widows have in God’s heart. Paul delineates three categories of widows: [1] widows with living relatives (5:4), [2] widows without relatives or a means of support—he refers to them as “widows indeed” (5:3;5,16), and [3] widows who are likely to remarry (5:11-15). These categories will help the church discern its responsibilities towards the care of widows. Apparently, there was a sizable widow population in the church at Ephesus where Timothy pastored. The problem was this: With respect to the church’s care of widows, how should we allocate the limited resources that we have?

Paul argues that of the three categories of widows in the church, only “widows indeed” qualify for ongoing church support. A “widow indeed” is a woman who is without a husband, without living relatives, without any prospects of remarriage, and without a sufficient means of financial support. These women are truly needy. But to be added to the “widow benevolence list,” these truly needy widows must also meet some additional qualifications (vv. 5:5, 9-10). From these verses, we can construct a profile of the kind of widow Paul says qualifies for regular benevolence support from the church. These qualifications are a combination of practical and spiritual concerns. Two questions seem to be of primary importance: Is she truly needy? Is she truly godly?

This passage also sheds some light on a very practical concern for those of us with aging parents: What is our Biblical responsibility towards our aging parents as their health declines and their financial resources dwindle? We can begin with a broad Biblical principle: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Exodus 20:12). This same command is repeated in the New Testament in Ephesians chapter 5. We are to honor our parents, and one of the ways we can honor them is by helping to provide for them in their old age. Paul makes this very point in 1 Timothy (vv. 3-4). Paul says that we are to “make some return to our parents;” that is, we are to financially assist them in return for the sacrifices they have made for us. Paul says, “this is acceptable in the sight of God.” In other words, this makes God happy! When children don’t provide for their aging parents, it puts a tremendous burden upon the church and society to fill in the gap. Caring for aging parents is not easy. Your siblings may not step up and do their part. You may have to put your plans on hold. Your paycheck won’t stretch as far. But you are doing the right thing, and that is what really matters. You are honoring God by honoring your parents, and God promises to bless that. We have a God-given responsibility to care for our aging parents, and we should do so in the manner that provides the highest level of care possible. Let’s meet that responsibility not with a grudging spirit, but with a grateful one.

“Social Justice” is a hot topic these days. What does the Bible have to say on the subject? This week’s sermon gets us started...

Monday— Skim 1 Timothy 5:3-16

- Review and summarize God’s special concern for the vulnerable, such as widows and orphans (see Sermon Summary).
- What are some of the **assumptions underlying** biblical teaching regarding care of the vulnerable?
Exodus 22:22-24 _____
Deuteronomy 14:28-29 _____
Deuteronomy 24:19-22 _____
- Now read the opening paragraphs on the *Wikipedia* article on “social justice”. What are some of its **underlying assumptions**?
- How are the biblical and secular views of social justice **similar**? How do they **differ**? **Why** do you think they differ?
- What **means** does the Bible authorize for bringing about justice for the vulnerable? What **means** does modern secular social justice use?
- Matthew 26:11a is simply stating a fact. What is it? _____
Will we **ever** be able to create an earthly utopia? Why or why not?

Tuesday— Read 1 Timothy 5:3-16

- In 1 Timothy 5:3-16, circle the word “widow”. (You’ll find it in v. 3 [2x], 4, 5, 9, 11, 14, and 16 [2x]). But as we saw, not all widows are equally vulnerable, so now mark these three categories of widows: [**a**] those who **have family** who can support them (v. 4, 16a), [**b**] those who **can get family** who can help them (v. 11-15), and [**c**] those who have **no possibility of family** help (“widows indeed”; v. 3, 5, 16b). So, although a widow literally is any woman who is bereft of her husband through death—clearly not all widows are equally vulnerable.
- 1 Timothy 5 shows that there are **two broad categories of risk**. Let’s explore them one at a time.
(1) “widows indeed” [type “c” above; v. 3, 5, 16b] are at **risk of starvation**: according to v. 5 she has been “left _____”. She has “_____ her _____ on God”. And she prays a lot! She “_____ in entreaties & prayers _____ & _____.”
(2) widows who have means [type “a” above; v. 4, 6] and “younger widows” [type “b” above; v. 11-15] are at **risk of sin** (or **worse***): they are at risk of “incurring _____” (v. 11b), in fact, “some of them have already _____ to follow _____”! (v. 14c). In fact, her lifestyle may reveal that she currently is **unsaved*** (v. 6b).
- Notice that these two types of vulnerability, these two categories of risks, are to be handled very differently. When a widow is truly vulnerable **and** truly godly (we’ll explore evidences of godliness tomorrow), she is to be “**put on the list**” to **receive on-going aid**. When a widow has options—ie, when she’s young enough to marry—**she is to remarry, raise kids, and keep house**. (v. 14).

Wednesday— Read 1 Timothy 5:3-16

- “Widows indeed” are to be supported with church funds. The criteria they must meet in order to qualify are:
(v. 5) she is truly “alone”—no children or grandchildren (v. 3), believing mother (v. 16), or hope of a husband (v. 9a) to support her.
(v. 5, 9-10) she is truly “godly”—she has fixed her hope and prayers on God, she’d been a faithful wife, she has a reputation of devoting herself to deeds that are “fair/beautiful” (v. 10a) and “beneficial/good” (v. 10c). She raised kids, showed hospitality to strangers, served the church in humble ways, and assisted others when they were in a tight spot.
- Clearly, no one **plans** to be destitute—yet it happens. But if you live a debauched life for 50 years it will be hard to qualify for aid!
So now is the time to “discipline oneself for godliness” (4:7-8)—because it is profitable now (today as well as in our old age), and throughout eternity. So how about you? How are you doing on each of these critical traits? Rate yourself [👍 or 📉]...
 Have you “fixed your hope on God”? (v. 5)
 Have you developed a life of continuous prayer? (v. 5)
 Are you being faithful to your marriage vows? (v. 9)
 Do you have a reputation of devotion to beautiful, beneficial deeds toward others? (v. 10a & 10c)
 Have you helped raise children—your own or others’? (v. 10)
 Have you shown hospitality to strangers? (v. 10)
 Have you humbly served in menial ways in the church? (v. 10)
 Have you helped others who were in need? (v. 10)
- To which of these traits (📉) do you need to give some focused attention? (Need some help? Write to <counseling@tcc.org>)

Thursday— Read 1 Timothy 5:3-16

- **Do you really believe** that the danger of sin is **more serious than** the danger of starvation (“to die is gain”—Philippians 1:21)? Look at v. 6. “The person who lives only for pleasure is spiritually dead (ie, is unsaved; is going to hell) even while he lives.” Is there any other (legitimate) way to interpret this? Read Luke 12:20-21. **That’s worse** than starvation! See Luke 16:18-31.
- Because of the horrible risk involved, pastors are to “prescribe these things” (ie, to “**lay something down as a rule to be followed**”). How do you respond when someone gives you a rule to be followed? How should you? How can you change?
- Notice the positive outcome of pastors’ prescribing biblical teaching: “**so that** they may be above reproach”. We’ve encountered this standard before—do you remember it? See 1 Timothy 3:2. **We all** can measure up to the measure of maturity: the standards for eldership. And notice the negative that is avoided: we will not give God’s enemies grounds to mock him and discredit his church (v. 14c). Read Romans 2:23-24 to see what damage we do to our Savior’s reputation when we act hypocritically.

Friday— Read 1 Timothy 5:3-16

- So, godly widows who have no other resources for survival were “put on the list”. In doing so a mutual commitment is made: the church commits to their support and they pledge something too (v. 12b). To what do you think they committed themselves? It could mean their pledge to Christ, to follow him. Or, it could also be a pledge to the church, to serve in the ways listed in v. 10.
- But younger widows must not be put on the list for two reasons: depletion of church resources (v. 16b) and shipwreck of their faith.
- Godly old widows—“widows indeed”—make a pledge to Christ and the church, and they follow through. But younger widows are tempted to break their pledge (v. 12). How? They want to get married. **Wait!—are we now forbidding marriage?! (See 4:3!)** God is **not forbidding** marriage—in fact, **he commands it** (v. 14)!
- So, what’s going on here? What are younger widows at risk of doing? Read Matthew 5:37 and James 5:12. These young widows, who **thought** they were up to the challenge of living their remaining years in celibate service to Christ and his church, have second thoughts. They set aside a solemn pledge (v. 12), preferring their sensual desires to Christ (v. 11) and follow Satan (v. 15) into a lifestyle of laziness, gossip, meddling in other peoples’ business, and talking about things that are improper for saints (v. 13)! **That’s dangerous!** That’s more dangerous than starvation, because it has **eternal** consequences.

Saturday— Reread 1 Timothy 5:3-16

- Summarize what you’ve learned Tuesday about the three categories of widows.
- Summarize the dangers that exist for each category of widow.
- Summarize our obligation to provide for the survival of godly, destitute older believers.
- Summarize our obligation to protect others from the risk either of living for pleasure (v. 6) or of abandoning one’s promises (v. 11, 15).
- Summarize how all this fits with the American cultural ideal of autonomy and independence. Which one must yield to the other? **Why?**
- What changes do you think TCC needs to make corporately in order to comply with this biblical teaching?
- What changes do you think you need to make personally in order to comply with this biblical teaching?