

## Widow Wisdom

Sometimes when we follow an instruction manual to build something, we'll run across some steps that don't apply. I recently installed a set of ceiling-mounted garage organizers where the manual had a few pages describing how to install them if your studs went parallel to the shelves, and another set of pages described studs that were perpendicular. While it's nice to be able to skip past a bunch of steps that don't apply, do we approach some passages of Scripture that way? Are we quick to jump ahead, or is there something we could learn?

As Paul delivered his "instruction manual" (1 Tim. 3:15) for life in the church, he left Timothy some guidance for dealing with widows in 1st Timothy 5. Maybe you've just skipped over this section when studying since it might not apply to you or your congregation. Most sermons use this passage to note the differences between an individual Christian and the church (1 Tim. 5:4, 8, 16; James 1:27) as they make a case against the improper use of our collective money.

Although this passage may not apply, rather than just skipping over it or merely using it to make a point, what can we learn about who we are as the church and how we conduct ourselves together?

**The Big Idea:** Together, we see the lowliest and weakest among us as worthy of incredible honor and care, whether they're "our people" in the flesh or not.

### Together We Help the Helpless

- Binding together and assisting others (1 Tim. 5:3, 16) is such an incredible "selling point" for being a member of the Lord's church! We're presented with ample and apparent opportunities to help people and to receive help in return as the Lord's loving disciples (John 13:35).
- From the earliest moments of the church's establishment, sharing with and providing for each other was a given (Acts 2:45; 6:1; Gal. 2:9-10).
- Do you see that as our mission together as the church today? Next time you give, think about how your offering could make the difference between going hungry and eating for one of our needy members!

### Help is Given Carefully

- Balanced with the previous point, our collective help comes with strings attached (1 Tim. 5:11-14). We don't collectively help just anyone, but only those people who need our support AND meet specific criteria.
- Whenever we use our collective money, it needs to be done thoughtfully. Just like Paul, who treated the church's collective money very carefully (2 Cor. 8:16-22), we ought to ensure everything we're doing fits within God's will.
- When we collectively support someone, do we balance our liberality with caution and examination? Let's not be overly cautious so as never to help. But let's also not treat our support lightly either.

## **Character Counts**

- Our character matters (1 Tim. 5:5, 9-10)! Often we talk about the work a young man should be doing to prepare themselves to become an elder or deacon one day. But what about the work a young woman could do to prepare herself to be someday eligible for the church's help?
- Our good works are visible (1 Tim. 5:24-25), but they're investments that will pay off in eternity (Matt. 6:19-20) or even sooner.
- Is your character so clearly that of a faithful disciple of Christ? Or would there be a serious question about whether you qualified for our collective support?

## **Conclusion**

What a tremendous blessing to be a part of the Lord's family, where we help each other and receive help when necessary. Let's take care and be thoughtful about how we use the Lord's funds here. And let's make sure we remember how important our character is, both now and into eternity.