

LESSON 17

CARING FOR WIDOWS AND ORPHANS

CENTRAL TRUTH: God is the father of orphans and widows and always defends their cause.

MEMORY VERSE: A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His Holy dwelling.

----- **Psalm 68:5.**

LESSON TEXT

Exodus 22:22-24; 1Timothy 5:3-14.

Exodus 22:

22. "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan.
23. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry.
24. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.

1Timothy 5:

3. Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.
4. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.
5. The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.
6. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.
7. Give the people these instructions, too, so that no-one may be open to blame.
8. If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

----- **Fellowship of the Spirit** -----

9. No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, [Or has had but one husband]
10. And is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.
11. As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry.
12. Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge.
13. Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busy bodies, saying things they ought not to.
14. So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.

INTRODUCTION

God warned the Israelites not to unfairly treat the poor which also included the foreigners, the widows and the orphans. The regulations also revealed that, God was deeply concerned about the hardships of the widows, the poor, the orphans and the disadvantaged in the society. He was moved with compassion for them and said they should not be taken advantage of, for when people take advantage of them and they cry unto Him, He will definitely hear their cry and arise to their defence. In the Old Testament days giving to widows was emphasized. Throughout this period, God told His people to treat the poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners justly. Therefore Christians who help the poor, widows, orphans and the disadvantaged in the church and society greatly please God. In the Acts of the Apostles when the Church began to grow, it became necessary for the believers to pool their resources together to help the needy. This they did willingly (**Acts 2:44-47, 4:32**). In this way, everybody including the widows, orphans and the needy taken care of.

LESSON

The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy that the Church should care for the widows in need. He gave some qualifications for the identification of widows in need as follows: **they should be widows who are over 60 years old; those who have been faithful to their husbands; and those who have been showing hospitality.** The church in those days put such widows on the church's help list and was giving them assistance. Therefore widows, who were aged and had no families or children to care for them were recognized. In this regard, widows who are Church workers are to be recognized, and put on Church support list. The Apostle Paul stressed the importance of each family, especially believers to care for the needs of their widows and not let the church be burdened with them. The church must however take care of those widows in need and are working hard for the Lord and in the Church. Furthermore, **Paul instructed the Church not to put younger widows on the list for Church support.** Instead, they should marry to avoid the breaking of their pledges to God. **Besides Paul ordered the Church not to support lazy widows who refuse to work (2 Thes. 3:10).** Church members must help widows and orphans among them; James gives two principles that define the content of true Christianity. One of them is the call on every believer to look after orphans and widows in distress. Therefore, individual Christians are expected by God to show genuine love and care to the fatherless, widows and those in need. However, widows and orphans should not put their trust in man (**Jeremiah 17:5**); but in God. He is called of God the provider and He will take care of all their needs.

1 Peter 5:7 says we should cast our care upon him for He cares for us. On the other hand, there are inhuman cultural, traditional, and religious practices and rituals in most communities in Ghana which dehumanize widows and deprive orphans of their inheritance. In God's instructions to Israel concerning how widows and orphans should be treated, He specifically said widows and orphans should not be taken advantage of and mistreated; for if somebody does that, and they cry out to Him, He will surely hear their cry and punish those mistreating them. Nevertheless, some of these inhuman widowhood rites and practices that violate human rights are imposed on widows in various communities in our country. In most cases it is women who compel their fellow women to go through these rites. Even though, widowers go through

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certain form of rites and practices which are dehumanizing. Christians are to be closer to widows in such situations, encouraging and assuring them of their support. Widows should be encouraged to be believed that God will not disappoint them in any way. And that He will defend, care and provide for them and their children.

LIFE APPLICATION

1. How can we assist widows and orphans in their moment of grief?
2. Should a bereaved wife continue to bear the late husband's name?
3. What will you do to help a widow going through inhuman cultural rites and practices?
4. What can we do as Christians to stop inhuman widowhood rites?

----- DIALY BIBLE READING -----

Monday: God's commitment to widows and orphans. (Psalm 146:9).

Tuesday: Our commitment to widows and orphans. (Job 31:16-22).

Wednesday: The need to support an orphan. (Esther 10:5-7).

Thursday: Favour in helping widows and orphans. (Jer. 7:5-7).

Friday: Provision for widows and orphans. (Deut. 24:17-21).

Saturday: Pray for widows and orphans. (Psalm 10:17-18).

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