

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday March 8, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

Honoring 1 TIMOTHY GOD

HONORING GOD
“Caring For Widows and Those In Need ”
1 Timothy 5:3-16



Key Reminders for 1 Timothy:

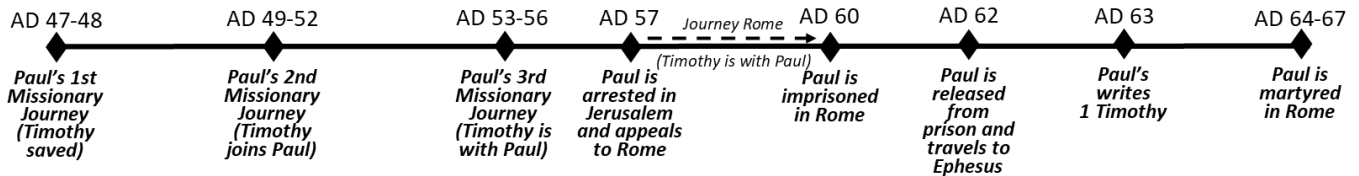
(1) **1 Timothy is a personal letter** – It is unlike most of Paul’s other letters that appear in the New Testament. Remember that most of Paul’s letters were written to churches and/or groups of churches, like Ephesians, Colossians, Galatians (a circular letter), etc. 1 Timothy was not a letter written to a group of Christians (churches). It is written to an individual and should be read and studied with that in mind. It’s personal in nature, rather than corporate. That doesn’t mean it’s not for the church today or applicable for

the church and Christians. It is! It just means that in studying and understanding the letter for context purposes this must be kept in mind. It does have a bearing on interpretation of Paul's letter.

- (2) **1 Timothy is written by Paul to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry** – As already - else's mail, or better said we are privileged by design to get to read someone else's mail. God want us to for a reason. He wants us to apply the truths Paul spoke to Timothy to our own lives. Remember that the name Timothy means "one who honors God," likewise our lives ought to honor God by how we conduct our lives, how we relate to believers in the church, how we serve and lead in the church, our behaviour, our spirit and attitudes, our words, our victory over the very things that defeat us and may keep us from being all that God has called us to be in Christ. Remember that Timothy was a young teenager from the town of Lystra when Paul first met him on his first missionary journey through Asia Minor. Paul lead Timothy to the Lord, as well as the rest of his family... his mother and grandmother. When Paul returned to the area on his second missionary journey, apparently Timothy has grown in his faith to the point that Paul asked him to join him on his missionary journey. Timothy would remain a ministry companion to Paul for the rest of Paul's life, as a faithful servant and fellow ministry.
- (3) **1 Timothy is known as a "Pastoral Epistle" (or letter)** – That makes this personal letter instructional especially for a pastor. There are three "Pastoral Epistles" in all in the New Testament; 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus, all written by Paul. They are "pastoral" in nature. In its simplest form, "pastoral" means pertaining to the pastor and or his responsibilities. The most common definitions of "pastoral" would be 1. Pastoral - of or pertaining to shepherds; hence, relating to rural life and scenes; as in a pastoral life (remember that pastors are often referred to the shepherd of the flock caring for their needs especially spiritual), 2. Pastoral – relating to the care of souls, or to the pastor of a church, as in, pastoral duties or a pastoral letter, 3. Pastoral – used to refer to the part of the work of teachers, preachers (pastors) and priests that involves giving help and advice about personal matters, or giving pastoral care through teaching, sermons, homilies, etc. The Pastoral Epistles are 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. All three are letters from an old man at the close of his ministry who is concerned for his successors in the pastorate. As such, the letters concern the things that would be crucial for the young pastors to understand—church organization and discipline, including such matters as the appointment of elders and deacons, the opposition of rebellious members or false teachers, and the maintenance of doctrinal purity.
- (4) **1 Timothy was written to address problems in the church at Ephesus and encourage their pastor, Timothy** – Timothy would eventually become the pastor of the church at Ephesus, likely around AD 62, following Paul's release from prison. Paul's release allowed him the opportunity to travel to Ephesus and eventually place Timothy in ministry at that church. Paul often sent Timothy to churches as his representative (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2), and 1 Timothy finds him on another assignment, serving as pastor of the church at Ephesus (1 Thessalonians 1:3)... a troubled church with problems (Revelation 2:4, "... *you have left*

your first love.”). Timothy find’s himself... perhaps at a young age, pastoring a very strategic, yet troubled church with a lot of problems.

(5) 1 Timothy was likely written about AD 63 - The Bible’s silence on the ultimate fate of Paul has generated a great deal of debate in modern times. The book of Acts ends with Paul sitting in a Roman prison awaiting his hearing before the Roman emperor, a privilege of appeal that all Roman citizens like Paul possessed. However, the writing of the Pastoral Epistles clearly dates to a time after the events of Acts. So where was Paul when he wrote 1 Timothy? Paul had expected the Romans to release him from prison, something that likely happened near the end of AD 62 (Philippians 2:24). As previously stated, his release allowed him the opportunity to travel to Ephesus and eventually place Timothy in ministry at that church. Paul then went on to preach in Macedonia, where he heard reports of Timothy’s work at Ephesus that prompted him to write 1 Timothy, probably in AD 63.



³ Honor widows who are really widows. ⁴ But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. ⁵ Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. ⁶ But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. ⁷ And these things command, that they may be blameless. ⁸ 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 an unbeliever. ⁹ Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, ¹⁰ well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. ¹¹ But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, ¹² having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. ¹³ And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. ¹⁴ Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. ¹⁵ For some have already turned aside after Satan. ¹⁶ If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows." – 1 Timothy 5:3-16 (NKJV)

David Lloyd-George once said, “The true test of a civilization is the way it treats its old people.”

A *U.S. News & World Report* (4/3/81) article uncovered the ugly fact of brutality against the aged by their own families, “Each year, perhaps a million elderly Americans—or about 1 out of every 25—are abused by relatives.... Few people are aware of such abuse, although it occurs with a frequency only slightly less than child abuse.... Only one in six cases ever comes to the attention of authorities.... Victims are likely to be 75 or older, and women suffer more often than men. The most likely abuser is the son, followed by the daughter and spouse....”

Though the article described physical, sexual, and extreme emotional abuse, we in the church are sometimes guilty of another form of abuse toward the elderly and those in need among us... apathy. Perhaps many of you reflect such apathy by responding to the topic of this sermon, “Caring for Widows and Those in Need,” with a wide yawn. I must confess that it isn’t a hot topic that I would particularly pick to teach on. But the very length of Paul’s discussion (14 verses) makes it hard to miss. Maybe God is trying to get our attention on a subject we’re inclined to shrug off. God is concerned that His people be concerned about widows and those in particular need.

It’s a problem that will only continue to grow in our culture, as our population ages. Right now, in the year 2023, 16 % of the American population are 65 or older, with the greatest increase in the over-75 group, which is more in need of physical and financial care. One-half of women over 65 have lost their spouses, and two-thirds of those over 75. Four times as many widows are alive as widowers.

There are numerous passages and places in the Bible dealing with widows. God has a special concern for them, along with orphans and others in difficult circumstances. Many passages lay down laws to protect widows. God is described as their protector and judge:

4 Passages of Support for Widows and Those in Need:

- (1) **Psalm 68:5** – *“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows is God in His holy habitation.”*
- (2) **Psalm 146:9** – *“The Lord watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow, but the way of the wicked He turns upside down.”*
- (3) **Deuteronomy 27:19** - *“‘Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due to strangers, the fatherless, and widow.’ And all the people said, ‘Amen!’”* Interestingly, the New American Standard says it like this, *“‘Cursed is he who distorts the justice due to an alien (NIV=foreigner; ESV=sojourner; NLT=foreigners), orphan, and widow,’ And all the people said, ‘Amen.’”*
- (4) **James 1:27** – *“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”*

Do you think God cares about widows, and orphans and illegal aliens, those who are in need?

It's significant that Paul, learned theologian and visionary apostle, was concerned about the care given to widows in the local church. In these verses to Timothy, he gives some wise, practical counsel, telling us that ...

The church should wisely care for the widows and by implication those in greatest need.

Due to the difficult nature of this passage, I think it best to follow the outline of the text to explain what Paul is saying. Then we'll draw some practical lessons. There are two sections:

2 Sections to Paul's Words to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:3-16:

(1) 1 Timothy 5:3-10 = The duty to support needy widows

(2) 1 Timothy 5:11-16 = The duty not to support younger widows

THE CHURCH HAS A DUTY TO SUPPORT NEEDY WIDOWS (1 Timothy 5:3-10)

"³ Honor widows who are really widows. ⁴ But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. ⁵ Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. ⁶ But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. ⁷ And these things command, that they may be blameless. ⁸ 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 an unbeliever. ⁹ Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, ¹⁰ well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work."
 – 1 Timothy 5:3-10

There are four types of widows in these verses...

4 Types of Widows in 1 Timothy 5:3-16:

(1) The "widows indeed" [real widows]- (1 Timothy 5:3-5, 9-10) (NKJV = really widows; NASB & NIV = "really in need"), who do not have family members to care for them

(2) Widows with children and grandchildren - (1 Timothy 5:4, 16)

(3) Younger widows, who should remarry - (1 Timothy 5:11-15)

(4) Widows who live for pleasure rather than for the Lord - (1 Timothy 5:6)

Paul's words to Timothy concerning ministry caring for widows and those in need seems to center on personal interaction and relationship, and of course individual personalized care. It should be noted that we often tend to try to make broad stroke assumptions when caring for those in need, stereotyping rather than dealing with needs on an individual basis. Ministry is rarely "stereotypical" and no two situations are the same. We must not treat people like merely a "text book" case study, impersonal, and dehumanized. People need to be cared for as the precious soul of God they are, and ministry should reflect such.

I actually love the personal pastoral care type instructions Paul gives Timothy here, and I think it is a perspective that not only pastors need, but deacons, and leaders in the church and also church members and Christians as ministers of the Christ and the gospel.

Here Paul give us 2 principles for care the church and Christians should give to widows and those in need.

2 Principles of Care for Widows and Those in Need:

(1) Needy widows should be cared for by the church (1 Timothy 5:3-6, 9-10) –

Who is a “real widow” or a “widow indeed”?

- A “widow indeed” is a godly woman over 60 (v. 9) who has been left alone.
- Either she has no children and grandchildren, or they have died or are so far away as not to be able to render aid to her.
- This woman has fixed her hope on God (v. 5) and is a woman of prayer.
- Anna, the godly old woman in the Temple who held the baby Jesus, is an example (Luke 2:36-38).

Paul says that the church should “honor” such widows (v. 3). This is not to imply that we may disrespect other widows! Paul means that the church should help them financially. (In a moment we’ll look at the further stipulations, vv. 9-10).

The Greek word translated “*honor*” has a double meaning.

Double Meaning of “Honor”:

- 1. First, it has the idea of a “price” paid or received**
- 2. From there it came to refer to honor or esteem attached to something or someone due to their value**

****Thus the word can refer both to material support and/or esteem. In 1 Timothy 5:17, the word has both senses. In 1 Timothy 6:1, it clearly refers to esteem. In our text (1 Timothy 5:3), it seems weighted toward material support.***

Scholars differ as to whether there was an “official order” of church widows in Paul’s time. We do know from a fourth century work called “The Apostolic Constitutions,” that there came to be an official order of widows later in church history.

It seems at least that Paul is giving requirements for widows who could qualify for church aid.

Here are some of Paul’s requirements:

- They were to be actively devoted to the ministry of the church, and the church gave them financial help.

- In verses 9-10, Paul elaborates on the conditions of verses 3-5 concerning needy widows.
- They are to be at least 60 years old.
- Younger widows Paul advises to remarry.
- They are to be the wife of one husband, literally, “a one-man woman,” the same qualification laid down for elders and deacons (3:2, 12).
- She is to have a reputation for good works (v. 10), including “bringing up children.”
- This probably means that if she has had children, she has raised them in the faith.
- But it may also include caring for unwanted orphans.
- In the Roman world, unwanted children were often left unattended to die.
- Unscrupulous people would sometimes take them for slavery or prostitution.
- But a godly Christian woman would take them into her own home to care for them.
- Furthermore, she must have shown hospitality to strangers and have washed the saints’ feet, a sign of her humility in serving the church.
- She must have assisted those in distress, which could refer to everything from visiting the sick and helping them to giving counsel and comfort to the distraught.
- To sum up, she has “devoted herself to every good work.”
- The widows in the church who met these qualifications were recognized by the church as being on “the list” (v. 9) and they were to serve in various capacities in the church.

In contrast to these godly women, Paul mentions widows who live for “wanton pleasure” (v. 6). The word means “to live in luxury” (see Ezek. 16:49, LXX, where God condemns Sodom because “she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but did not help the poor and needy”). **Thus Paul is referring to a widow who lives in luxury and has no concern for others.** Such a woman is “dead even while she lives.” She is insensitive to the things of God.

Key Truth: This verse sounds a warning to us American Christians. The spirit of our age is, **“I’ve worked hard all my life. I’ve saved up enough to enjoy myself. Now that I’m retired, I don’t want to be bugged. I’m going to block out the world and its problems and live for me.”** But a godly person approaching retirement should see it as an opportunity to be freed up so that he or she can devote more time to serving the Lord. Real fulfillment is not found in living for pleasure and self-gratification; that is death. Real fulfillment is found in living for Christ and serving others for His sake. What about a widow with children or grandchildren?

- (2) **Widows with families should be cared for by their family members (1 Timothy 5:4, 7-8)** - Paul plainly commands that a widow with children or grandchildren should be cared for by them. The parents have contributed immeasurably to their children and grandchildren’s welfare. Now it is their turn “to make some return” (v. 4) to their widowed mother or grandmother. This is “acceptable” or pleasing in the sight of God (v. 4). In fact, Paul goes so far as to say that if a person does not provide for his own family

(and he clearly includes elderly parents), he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (v. 8)! Even most unbelievers were kind enough to provide for aged parents.

It was Greek law from the time of Solon that sons and daughters were morally and legally bound to support their parents (William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* [The Westminster Press], p. 106).

The word “provide” (v. 8) is literally, “to think ahead” or “to take thought for,” and is a pretty good case for a man to have adequate life insurance or other provision for his family. Thus Paul is saying that if you don’t provide financially for your family—not luxury, but for their needs—you are behaving worse than unbelievers.

To sum up, the principle is, if the family can provide for older widows, they should do so. If there is no family to provide, then such older widows may be supported by the church if they are godly women devoted to serving Christ. If they are living for pleasure, then the church has no responsibility for them. But what about younger widows?

So let me give you these... because I think we can draw some principles

3 Possible Truths We May Garner From Paul’s Instructions to Timothy:

- (1) If someone is unable to help themselves we should and have a responsibility to help them -**
- (2) If someone is able to help themselves, but won’t, we are not under obligation to help, but should encourage them in love to take responsibility for themselves – I say we are not under obligation, because in specific situation some may still choose to assist and offer help feeling lead of the Lord or in an attempt to show compassions**
- (3) We should be care not to enable or victimize others through our help and assistance – *How do we (may we) sometimes enable or victimize others through our assistance?* To “victimize” someone is to make them a “victim” or to make them feel as if they are helpless and cannot (don’t have the ability to help themselves) We may actually do more harm than good if we make someone feel helpless and hopeless unless we help them. No one is ever helpless or hopeless if they know the Lord and have Him on their side... and the Bible tell us he looks after the widows and orphans. We may also create a sense of dependency on us, our resources and gifts. This is what is often referred to as “enabling” another to remain dependent on someone else. Our dependency ought to be on God and God alone. He will supply all our needs according to Scripture... now, sometimes (oft-times) He chooses to us His church and His people (Christians) to be His hands and His feet and minister to the needs of others, but not to make them dependent on man... but rather to let them see and praise God for his good and perfect gift(s).**

NOTE: To me there is difficult balance to strike here, and the Holy Spirit and a sense of discernment, listening to the voice and direction from Him must come into play.

THE CHURCH HAS A DUTY NOT TO SUPPORT YOUNGER WIDOWS (1 Timothy 5:11-16)

“¹¹ But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, ¹² having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. ¹³ And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. ¹⁴ Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. ¹⁵ For some have already turned aside after Satan. ¹⁶ If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.” – 1 Timothy 5:11-16 (NKJV)

Paul is wise and practical. He does not want the church to turn into some kind of enabling institution or welfare agency, supporting those who are more than able to serve but are unwilling to carry their own load, who are more than able to supply their needs, but are unwilling to work at it and help themselves where they can to carry their own load.

As a matter of fact, I believe that the church and Christians ought to lead the way in our day, on what a true ministry of welfare to those in need ought to look like. Folks listen, there are those who are truly in need of help and assistance in our day, but the governmental system of welfare with its abuses and bureaucratic red tape, I am afraid, often does more harm than good, keeps people enslaved to poverty and dependency rather than truly help, causes generational poverty among family and some segments of our society today.

Again, Paul’s advice in instruction here to the church is wise and practical and I think based on sound Biblical understand of man and his needs, and responsibilities that God intended for us to have both as those who are often in need ourselves and in helping those who are in need. In verses 11-16 of our passage I believe we see some of this practical instruction.

2 Bits of Practical Instruction to the Church:

(1) Younger widows should not be supported, but should marry and be devoted to their families (1 Timothy 5:11-15) - These verses are not easy to interpret. Some understand that the older widows made some kind of pledge to the Lord and to the church to the effect that they would remain single so as to devote their remaining years completely to serve the Lord. If a younger widow made such a pledge, but then started wishing to marry again, she would thus go back on her pledge and incur the censure of the church. **Paul is not condemning the natural desire of a younger widow to remarry. What is wrong is the breaking of a pledge.**

Others take it differently. The words “previous pledge” (v. 12) are literally, “first faith.” Coupled with verse 15, they argue that Paul was addressing an existing problem, namely, that these younger widows who were put on the support of the church were allowing their desire to remarry to be greater than their faith in Christ, so that they even would remarry an unbeliever. **Furthermore, they were falling into the errors of the false teachers** (the terms used to describe these women in 5:13 parallel those used of the false teachers, 1:6-7; 4:7; 6:3-4, 20). Thus they were actually turning away from their first faith in Christ, promoting false teaching, and marrying on the basis of sensual desires, not marrying in the Lord. Thus Paul instructs that they not be supported, but rather marry and devote themselves to home duties, so as to give the enemy no occasion for reproach (5:14).

(2) Believers in the church with a dependent widow family member should support them (1 Timothy 5:16) – Notice **verse 16, “¹⁶ If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”** Some later manuscripts add “any believing man,” probably added by a copyist because the original, “believing woman,” is difficult. Probably Paul, as an afterthought, is answering a question which might arise, “But what if there is no man as the head of the household? Should the church then support the widows in that family?” Paul says that a believing woman should do all that she can to support or assist widows in her family so that the church is freed up to minister to widows truly in need.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion let me give you some practical lessons that we may carry away with us from a passage such as this and this study.

Practical Lessons:

1. **Godly families are at the heart of a godly church** - And, godly mothers are indispensable to godly families. In 1 Timothy 5:10 & 14, bearing and raising children are mentioned first in the list of good deeds. We live in a day when many Christian women are putting their careers ahead of their duties at home. The notion that a woman should be “just a homemaker” is viewed today with deprecation (scorn, contempt, strong disapproval), and as a cultural anachronism (relic, holdover, archaism) that we no longer need to follow. The truth is, we are living in different times and many times today a woman must work just so the family can survive. I also realize that there are difficult situations where a mother of young children has no alternative but to work, I’m not speaking against that. There is a balance to be had here, and we must strive for godly lives among men and women in marriage and the family where both parent work together to raise the next generation to honor and glorify God, and that will point other to Christ.
2. **As godly families, we each have a responsibility to honor and care for our elderly parents, especially widows** - Again, this is countercultural. Our society views the elderly as being a bother to our pursuit of personal pleasure. We’re so utilitarian that we discard

people who no longer can function in a contributing way. But the Bible says that it pleases God when children and grandchildren practice piety by making some return to their parents (1 Timothy 5:4).

It would be judgmentally wrong to say that every family must take elderly parents into their homes. That is a personal decision for each family and must be made with much prayer and seek the Lord. Sometimes that is not possible and doesn't work. There are situations where that is not a viable option. But even if an elderly parent must be put in a nursing facility, the children should not abandon them. Even if their minds no longer function properly, they still deserve our loving care and respect.

In a *Newsweek* "My Turn" article (9/10/79), Milton Gwirtzman noted, "Although Shanghai is one of the five largest cities in the world, it has just one home for the aged. Older people in China don't need Golden Age clubs or retirement communities. They have the most important life-support system of all: active, dignified work in an atmosphere of close family life and community respect."

Maybe American Christians can learn from the Chinese what the Bible affirms! The film series, "Whatever Happened to the Human Race," has a graphic scene depicting the way our culture neglects and abandons our old so that we can pursue our own interests. An elderly lady is wheeled down a white corridor by her children and grandchildren. They kiss her on the forehead and assure her that she will be all right. They leave and a nurse wheels the confused old woman into a darkened room where a TV set is blaring with the obnoxious voice of a game show host. She is abandoned by her family to live out her final days in front of the TV set!

Remember that God's way is not abandoning or killing the elderly; it is honoring and caring for them.

- 3. Godly elderly people can make a valuable contribution to the cause of Christ –** Although they may not have the energy of the young, the elderly have more time and the wisdom of a lifetime of walking with Christ. They can be involved in a ministry of prayer (v. 5) and good deeds (v. 10).

This can be about as broad as the person wants to make it.

- They can offer spiritual and practical counsel to younger families.
- They can serve on church committees.
- They can visit shut-ins or those in hospitals and nursing homes.
- They can call on church visitors.
- They can help in church office work.
- They can help Sunday School teachers in preparing materials or in managing their classes.

- They can assist in child evangelism ministries or by calling on the homes of Sunday School youngsters. (AWANA)
- They can open their homes in hospitality, help out with church socials, volunteer to babysit an evening for a younger couple, correspond with missionaries, help mission organizations, collect clothing for the needy, help a shut-in clean house, or use their individual skills in various ways.

You name it! There are many opportunities available to the godly older person who wants to serve Christ. Again, I would emphasize that we must deliberately reject the world's thinking about self-centered retirement living. As long as God gives us life and strength, we should live to serve Him.

4. **Godly living affects the practical areas of life** - Many people in our day claim to be Christians, but their lives are no different than those who do not know Christ as Savior. The gospel Paul preached urged people to “repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance” (Acts 26:20). Believers are to be zealous for good works (Titus 2:14). **We don't live to serve ourselves, whether we're 20 or 80.** We live to serve Jesus Christ and to lay down our selfish interests for the sake of those for whom Christ died. We are deliberately to reject the cult of self-fulfillment, and “through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13), not just in “spiritual” ways, but ministering to the total person.

Amy Carmichael, the missionary to India, was criticized for becoming too involved in humanitarian efforts because she sought to rescue little girls from being sold as temple prostitutes. She retorted, **“One cannot save and then pitchfork souls into heaven.... Souls are more or less securely fastened to bodies ... and as you cannot get the souls out and deal with them separately, you have to take them both together”** (cited by Ruth Tucker, *Guardians of the Great Commission* [Zondervan], p. 134). So, as a church and as individuals, we must be involved in practical good deeds that minister to the total person.

We must minister wisely. We are not to support someone who is living for pleasure. The church must not take on responsibilities that God has assigned to families. If people are able to work but refuse to do so, Paul was clear: they shouldn't eat (2 Thess. 3:10)! Each one must bear his own load (Gal. 6:5). But neither can we, as the church, turn our backs on the truly needy, especially on elderly widows. God cares for the widow who trusts in Him. So must we!

Discussion Questions

1. ***Agree/disagree: The many convalescent homes in America reflect our lack of concern for the aged.***
2. ***Is a live-in arrangement for aged parents always in the best interest of all parties concerned? Why/Why not?***
3. ***Can you build a biblical case for a Christian woman choosing a career track rather than motherhood? Is it sin for Christian mothers to work outside the home?***

4. *Why do you think that more elderly people are not involved in actively ministering in the church?*