

Training to Do God's Work...
God's Imperatives in Scripture

What does the Word of God say about
"Ministering to the Widows?"

What are our responsibilities as a deacon, as a church, as a Christian disciple toward the "Widow?"

Listen close, fellow Christians, because we have to meet some needs and I hope that this training lesson will convince you that there is a job, a task, a responsibility, a privilege for every church member concerning the widow:

I want you to know that God says in His Word...He takes care of the widow.

God:

- **Defends the cause of the Widow**
Deut. 10:18, *"He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing."*
Psalms 68:4-5, *"Sing to God, sing in praise of his name, extol him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before him—his name is the LORD. ⁵ A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling."*
- **Sustains the widow (to holds up or support; keeps; nourishes; strengthens)**
Psalms 146:9, *"The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked."*
- **Keeps the widow's boundaries intact (home will not be taken)**
Proverbs 15:25, *"The LORD tears down the house of the proud, but he sets the widow's boundary stones in place."*
- **Can be trusted to take care of the widow**
Jeremiah 49:11, *"Leave your fatherless children; I will keep them alive. Your widows too can depend on me."*
"The widows can trust God."

Do you want to know God? Isn't that the goal, the objective of life, of the Christian's life is to know the heart of God?

Jeremiah 22:15b, 16 says *"The father (king) did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the Lord.*"

Jesus is our example; He knew the heart of the Father...Our God! And, we are to be like Him.

"I and my Father are one." John 10:30

"If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." **John 14:9**

"Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith."
Hebrews 12:2

What does God say about us?

Do as Jesus does!!!

What does the Word say that we are to do about the widow?

- ***We are not to take advantage of the widow***
Exodus 22:22, "Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless."
- ***We are not to ever take the cloak of a widow as a pledge.***
Deut. 24:17, "Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge."
(No lending money to the widow and receive everything she has as a pledge)
- ***We are to plead the case of the widow***
Isaiah 1:17, "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow."
- ***We are to give to the widow...so they might be filled and satisfied...never to go hungry***
Deut. 26:12, "When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied."
- ***Look after the widows in distress***
James 1:27, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

Are we doing that in our churches?

Let's talk about James...yes, the one that just stated "Religion that our God accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after the orphans and widows in their distress..."

Who was this James? Did he quote it because he believed the Old Testament scriptures? Yes, probably...but there is another reason. There are several James in the Bible.

1. James, Apostle, Brother of John, Son of Zebedee

Matt. 10:2,3, *"These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;"*

2. James, Apostle, Son of Alphaeus

Matt. 10:2, 3 (same as above)

3. James, The Younger

Mark 15:40, *"Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome."*

4. James, Father of Judas, Not the betrayer

Luke 6:16, *"Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."*

5. James, the brother of Jesus

Mark 6:3, *"Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.*

Matt. 13:55, *"Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?"*

James, the brother of Jesus, whom we think wrote the book of James and made the statement concerning the widow.

This James was:

- **Not a part of Jesus' ministry....not an apostle**
- **Slow to accept Christ**

John 7:5, *"For even his own brothers did not believe in him."*

- **After the resurrection joined the disciples**

Acts 1:14, “They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.”

- **Possibly was won by the appearance of the Lord after His resurrection,**

1 Corinthians 15:3-7, “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,”

But, what did Jesus say at the Cross about His mother, who was a widow.

John 19:25-27, “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved (John) standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” ²⁷ and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Jesus had a responsibility to take care of his mother, a widow.....

Where was James?

James went to his grave, probably with some guilt...because John, not a part of the family...took care of his mother until she died.

We have widows in our church.....What are we doing to defend them, to sustain them, to look after them when they are distressed, hurting, and do we plead their case...by letting all the brothers and sisters know that they are hurting??

What can we do now?

1. *Adopt a Widow (Families, prayer groups, men’s groups, ladies groups)*
2. *Take them out to lunch*
3. *Organize a team to take care of things around the house*
Change oil in the car
Mend fences

*Change light bulbs
Fix little things around the house
Change filters in the house
Unclog drains
Check windows/Security
Take to doctor/Grocery Store
Be available to talk/conversation
Give a shoulder to cry on/Lift them up
Praise them*

If your church is not helping the widows of your church as they need help, then begin a ministry to the widow today!

Yes, it is the responsibility of the family of the widow to make sure needs are met. However, there are too many Scriptures telling the individual Christian and the church to fulfill their obligation in taking care of the needs of the true widow to just pass on this very critical need to others.

Find the time to do your part in ministering to the widow!



What kind of training is needed to take care of the widow?

Ask yourself and then ask the deacon body, “Do you know the Do’s and Don’ts of the Widows Ministry and how to assure their needs are met?”

Also...What do the widows say are important points to remember in ministering to the widow?



The Do's and Don'ts in Ministering to the Widow

Everyone deals with grief differently, and every loss is different. What works for one person may not work for someone else. Although every person, male or female, is different when it comes to needs in their life and how to handle troubles and the loss of a loved one, there are some guidelines for helping the widow (do's and don'ts).

1st...As a church, don't start a widow's ministry unless your church is ready to continue the ministry. The church must be committed to an on-going support system. Starting something for the widows and not finishing the task is a slap in the face to the widow and a blight on the church.

Note: The statement in this paragraph is my opinion (not necessarily biblically based). In most cases the do's and don'ts for a widow's ministry are geared for a woman assigned to a widow with the woman's husband doing the manual labor as the wife presents him with what is needed from the widow.

Here are some guidelines suggested from "A Widows Survey" as what to do and what not to do.

DO

- *Check in with the widow every few days, especially the first few months after a loss of spouse.*
- *Help her find qualified professionals to help make big decisions/actions. (Widow to make final decisions on any problem in which a contractor or repairman is to be paid).*
- *Offer to help (errands, home maintenance, meal preparation, etc.) and what times work for the helpers from the church.*
- *Assist with problem solving such as home repair, auto repair, choosing a lawn service, plumbing and electrical service, etc.*
 - *Note: See below bullet. Imperative in letting the final decision be the widows.*
- *Do research, provide qualified options and maybe give your opinion...but, allow the widow to make the final decision.*

- Offer to accompany the widow to appointments and places that may be difficult for her to go alone.
- Encourage her to get the help she needs, which may include support groups or counseling.
- Be forgiving, loving and show empathy.
- Show compassion and care; realizing that she is very vulnerable for the first year after the loss of a spouse.
- Stand with her and encourage her as she ventures out into the world again.
- Help her to believe in herself. Lift her up by accentuating the positives in her life.
- Keep loving her for who she is.
- Pray for her as often as possible. Let her know you are praying for her.
- Follow through and do whatever you tell the widow you are going to.

DON'Ts

- Don't be afraid to tell the widow that you have no idea what to say.
- Don't say you know exactly what she is going through.
- Don't be afraid to give her a Christian hug.
- Don't assume she will call when she needs help with something. DO be proactive and offer to help her with specific tasks or offer a specific timeslot when you can help out.
- Don't be afraid to mow her lawn or clear the snow from her driveway without asking if it is o.k.
- Don't take it personally if she forgets birthdays, appointments, etc.
- Don't be afraid to include her in get-togethers where other couples will be present.
- Don't ask how she is unless you would like an honest answer. Don't be surprised at her answers.
- Don't expect her to help you deal with your grief. She doesn't need to deal with others' problems for the 1st few months.
- Don't judge her for grieving too much or too little. Hurting emotionally is worse than a physical ache and pain.

- *Don't be discouraged if your offer to help is met with a "no." Keep contacting and keep visiting.*
- *Don't wait for someone else to step up. If you can do it, do it!*
- *Don't assume things are better just because months have gone by. Grieving is a long process.*
- *Don't take her depression and negativism personally. Continue to love her unconditionally and consistently. Be present and available, forever.*

The do's and don'ts above have been taken from widows comments as they were being interviewed by a reputable and responsible ministry. The list reflects honest and personal answers from widows who have thought about how they can be of help and support to other widows. Most of the answers were addressed by several widows and not from one despondent or hurt widow.

Psalm 68:4-5, "Sing to God, sing in praise of his name, extol him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before him—his name is the LORD. ⁵ A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling."

Since God is a defender of widows, I sure don't want to offend them or Him in any way!

It is our place to provide defense for the widow...by praying and meeting her needs without grumbling or complaining.

"Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only"...a quote by James, the brother of Jesus and the son of Mary, his mother (a widow).



Ministering to the Widow
Scriptures

Deuteronomy 10:18

Psalm 68:4-5

Psalm 146:9

Proverbs 15:25

Jeremiah 49:11

Exodus 22:22

Deuteronomy 24:17

Isaiah 1:17

Deuteronomy 26:12

James 1:27

Matthew 10:2, 3

Mark 15:40

Luke 6:16

Mark 6:3

Matthew 13:55

John 7:1-5

Acts 1:14

1 Corinthians 15:3-7

John 19:25-27