

CARING FOR THE VULNERABLE

Love: How do these devotions teach about the love of God and the love for one another?

Learn: What have you learned about where Jesus walked that helps you with where you walk?

Share: What key insights have you learned this week on how to share your faith with others?

Monday October 31st – Widowhood presents a difficult time in a woman’s life, especially when compounded with a diminished ability to meet financial needs, a common circumstance in the ancient patriarchal world of the Bible. Widows in the Bible, therefore, become a special teaching opportunity for the Biblical authors to present theological insights. Read Psalm 68:5, Ps 146:9, Deut. 27:19, James 1:27 and think about the stance the Bible is making for widows, how God sees them and how we as Christians should respond to their needs.

Tuesday, September 1st – In both the New Testament and Hebrew Bible, widows are repeatedly the subjects of miracles. Following the death of her husband, a widow’s best hope for security would be her son’s ability to provide for her. The loss of a son was thus an even greater tragedy for a widow. Three miracles concerning widows in the Bible prevent or restore the loss of the widows’ sons so the family can survive (1 Kings 17:17–24; 2 Kings 4:1–7; Luke 7:11–17). The case of the widow Naomi, however, has a twist because her redemption comes unexpectedly through her widowed daughter-in-law Ruth, rather than her own sons (Ruth 2–4).

In other examples from the Bible, widows such as Abigail and Judith use their beauty and resourcefulness to take care of themselves and others. *How can we care for widows in such a way that leaves room for their own growth and even God’s miracles?*

Wednesday, September 2nd – God is the kind of God who keeps a careful eye on the widow. God is profoundly concerned for her, together with the stranger and the fatherless. God is righteous and protects them for God is “a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows . . . in his holy habitation,” (Psalm 68:5). The incarnate Son of God is like him. He cared for his widowed mother (John 19:25-17), he raised from the dead the son of the widow of Nain and returned him to his mother (Luke 7:11-17), and, in the spirit of the prophets, condemned those who took advantage of widows (Matthew 23:24). *How are we called to be a “defender of widows” in our time?*

Thursday, September 3rd – God commanded that the nation of Israel care for widows, being diligent to not isolate them or take advantage of their vulnerability. Deuteronomy 16:11-14 shows how God provided for widows so that they were not excluded; instead, they enjoyed full participation in the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. However, when the nation of Israel turned away from serving God, they also turned away from his commandments. Who suffered when that happened? Widows were among the first casualties. The Old Testament prophets reproached those who wronged widows and called the nation back to its God-given responsibilities (e.g. Isaiah 10:1-3, Jeremiah 22:1-5, Ezekiel 22:6-7). *How do these selections of scripture call us to imitate God in the care for the vulnerable in our midst?*

Friday, September 4th – The church is called to be God-like, imitating his example and obeying his commandments. The early church cared for widows (Acts 6). In fact, the task was so important that seven men of good reputation, full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit, were selected to be responsible for the matter. Paul laid out clear instructions in 1 Timothy 5 about how widows were to be regarded and treated. James did not mince his words in James 1:27. He said, in effect, “Let’s be clear about the nature of real religion. It must be visible and practical. It visits widows and orphans in their trouble as well as maintains moral purity in an evil world.” *The early church created a taskforce, a committee, to deal with widow issues. How do we balance ministry by committee and equipping every person in our church to be active in helping others?*

Saturday, September 5th – Widows (and orphans) were the most vulnerable persons in the ancient world and that is why the Bible talks so much about helping them. Who do you see in our society as the most vulnerable? What if we looked beyond poverty and considered those who are discriminated against? Who are those in our midst often denied justice? Should the church expand its idea of “widow and orphan” and go to where people are hurting?

Serve: Look at the prayer list. Who can you pray for? Who needs a little extra help in an area where you can make a difference?

Healing Strength: Meredith Hogan (Adam Zietlow), Charlie Walters, Chris & Katie Hamon, Rex Townsend, Stan Ensich, Chris Osborn (Ken and Sandy Grubb’s daughter), Janet Coons (Donna McCullough’s daughter)

Homebound Members: Mary Hicks, Mary Schmidt, Joann Young, Jeanne Carman

Military Personnel: Adam Walters, Joseph Roberts, Lucas Lamkin, Adam Clark