

# 1 Timothy 5:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

## Analysis

**If any man or woman that believeth have widows** (εἴ τις πιστὸς ἢ πιστὴ ἔχει χήρας, ei tis pistos ē pistē echei chēras)—'if any believing man or woman has widows [in their family].' Pistos/pistē means believer (male/female). The phrase 'has widows' means has widowed relatives needing support—mother, grandmother, aunt, etc.

**Let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged** (ἐπαρκεῖτω αὐταῖς, καὶ μὴ βαρεῖσθω ἡ ἐκκλησία, eparkeitō autais, kai mē bareisthō hē ekklēsia)—'let them provide for them, and let not the church be burdened.' Eparkeo means to aid, help, relieve. Bareō means to burden, weigh down. **That it may relieve them that are widows indeed** (ἵνα ταῖς ὄντως χήραις ἐπαρκέσῃ, hina tais ontōs chērais eparkesē)—'so it may help those who are truly widows.'

Paul's principle is clear: families bear primary responsibility for their widowed members. The church should support only genuinely alone widows without family. This preserves church resources for those truly in need and prevents enabling families to shirk their duty. Stewardship requires discernment—helping everyone means helping no one well.

## Historical Context

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The early church's benevolence funds were limited—mostly from voluntary offerings of working-class believers. Careless distribution would quickly exhaust resources, leaving truly needy widows unsupported. Paul establishes priorities: family first, then church. This both protects church resources and teaches families their God-given responsibility. The principle applies broadly—wise stewardship requires discerning genuine need.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. Why must families take primary responsibility for their widows rather than defaulting to church support?
2. How does this principle of family-first responsibility apply to other benevolence situations?
3. What happens when churches don't discern genuine need but give indiscriminately?

3