

# 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** (ἐπαρκείτω αὐταῖς, καὶ μὴ βαρείσθω 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** (ἴνα 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?

## Interlinear Text

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εἰ	τις	πιστὴ	ἢ	πιστὴ	ἔχει	χήραις	ἐπαρκέσῃ	
G1487	G5100	man	or	man	have	them that are widows	it may relieve	
		G4103	G2228	G4103	G2192			
						G5503		
							G1884	
αὐταῖς	καὶ	μὴ	βαρείσθω	ἢ	ἐκκλησίᾳ	ἴνα	ταῖς	ὄντως
them	and	not	be charged	G3588	the church	that	G3588	indeed
G846	G2532	G3361	G916		G1577	G2443		G3689
χήραις		ἐπαρκέσῃ						
them that are widows		it may relieve						
		G5503						
			G1884					

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Timothy 5:8** (Faith): But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

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