

# 22. Gospel Shaped Family

## *Helping Without Hurting*

1. Introduction → Where dreams and reality meet.
  - a. Dreamers and Doers
    - i. Those who dream up utopia and those who figure out how to pay for it
    - ii. Often at odds.
  - b. When we read books, it is easy to fall in love w/ the ideal
    - i. Dreamers tend to write the books more so than the Doers (visionary books are interesting, exhilarating) → Radical, Crazy Love, etc.
    - ii. Dreamers make it sound easy. Doers point out the problems.
    - iii. Dreamers get frustrated w/ Doers for popping their balloon
  - c. We need dreamers and doers
  - d. The tension of these two concepts is a ministry reality, especially for WOVEN
  - e. Passage is about widows (Ephesian issue), but principles apply to many areas
  - f. Lots of tough words here...
2. *[3] Honor widows who are truly widows.*
  - a. **The church can't/shouldn't help everyone.**
    - i. Dreamers: this makes you mad
      1. Sometimes Dreamers help without thinking about it...
    - ii. Doers, you realize that there are only so many resources
      1. Doers might be tempted not to help at all, to reason it away
  - b. **Problem is that by helping people who shouldn't be helped, those who do need help fall through the cracks and the gospel is shamed.**
    - i. ex: Beach clean-up and then needing real help & couldn't find people
  - c. **Sometimes helping can hurt.**
    - i. UN Water Initiative; Culture of relief in Haiti
3. *[4] But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.*
  - a. **Family and friends are the first line of defense in caring for those in need.**
  - b. The local church is the second line of defense in caring for those in need
    - i. Discipleship Groups first, and then the mothership
  - c. **Caring for your family is biblical ministry.**
    - i. Moms, children, grandchildren
    - ii. Your thread may be (at this season) to care for your family
    - iii. *I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. (John 17:4 ESV)*
  - d. Don't let anyone guilt you into thinking that family isn't real ministry.
4. *[5] She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day,*
  - a. We can't help everyone, so we must prioritize (tension of Dreamers and Doers)

- b. Because life is complex, we need Doers to help the Dreamers dream w/ purpose → we need standards, rubrics
  - c. When there are too many needs, **the church should help people who truly have need.** → No family to help, no job to provide finances
  - d. When there are too many needs, **the church should help people who are seeking God.**
    - i. We can't help everyone and your church family gets first priority
    - ii. Do good to everyone, but especially to those who believe (your family)
5. *[6] but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. [7] Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach.*
- a. The widow who isn't devoted to God, however, doesn't get any help from God's family b/c she her hope isn't in God but in pleasure
  - b. I am NOT saying you should never help a non-Christian - just hear me out
  - c. **Some people don't need relief. They need instruction.**
  - d. There are times when helping hurts → you promote a situation rather than help it
    - i. Ex: WorldVision story from Ethiopian famine in 1990's
    - ii. Ex: Someone w/ habitual money problems, constant debt
    - iii. Relief vs. Development; Bailout vs. sustainability
      - 1. e.g. Teach a man to fish
      - 2. e.g. Story of teaching the crippled beggars how to mold PVC
6. *[8] But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*
- a. Again, it doesn't mean that this person shouldn't get help, but they shouldn't (necessarily) get help from the local church's bank account
  - b. Their family and friends should provide for them and instruct them
  - c. To ignore them as a family member is to act as someone without faith
  - d. We shouldn't use the safety nets of society as excuses to ignore people
7. *[9] Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, [10] and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.*
- a. Paul touched on family caring for people. He talked about not caring for everyone, and then he gives some guidelines for how you help those in need.
  - b. Enrolled referred to giving the older widows responsibility in exchange for the financial care they received
  - c. Explain how culturally widows didn't have many options and so had a lot of free time without a lot to do
  - d. Point is this: When you help, **Don't just give people money, give them dignity.**
    - i. Giving someone a job is more beneficial than giving them a bailout
    - ii. Teaching someone to manage their finances is better than giving them \$
  - e. To put it another way, **"Help without hurting"**
8. *[11] But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry [12] and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their*

former faith. [13] Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. [14] So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. [15] For some have already strayed after Satan.

- a. The danger of developing into a system person
  - b. If you are able, it is better to work hard and move on with your life than to live off of other people's generosity forever.**
9. [16] If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.
- a. Paul returns to his original point: **The church can't help everyone.**
  - b. Family is the first line of defense
  - c. We should have some standards of who we help and when
  - d. Why? Because the church can't help everyone
10. Applying this → a ton of principles here. I probably should have made this into a series
- a. I want to talk about what this looks like in the 21st Century as well for us
    - i. Abandoned or divorced families
      1. "Who will be a father figure to my son?"
      2. "Where will I spend the holidays?"
    - ii. Adoption, fostering
    - iii. Abortion → Be willing to be part of the solution (adopt, walk w/ young moms, show grace in the midst of sinful choices)
    - iv. Homeless → AC Rescue Mission & Family Promise have both done the hard work of filtering for you...
      1. What they need is volunteers who are invested
  - b. We are called to be family to those without family.**
    - i. That is the ideal, but the reality is that it is messy
    - ii. WOVEN - What's your thread?**
  - c. We need to learn to help without hurting.**
    - i. Read: When Helping Hurts; Toxic Charity;
    - ii. Learn discretion
    - iii. Practice Biblical Principles
    - iv. Realize that sometimes you will be viewed as the bad guy even though you are doing the right thing.
  - d. Don't let fear of not knowing what to do paralyze you into inaction. Follow the Spirit's leading and prompting.**
    - i. Learning to help without hurting, learning to love as family makes the gospel beautiful, but there's another important thing to remember
    - ii. God's grace is sufficient for all our failings in figuring this out
  - e. Be family to those without family, but help without hurting.**