

# Honoring Widows

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*"Honour widows that are widows indeed."* (1 Timothy 5:3 KJV)

Honor widows. It would seem a small thing to do; Fix a value on who they are, respect them. A wife's husband is killed in a tragic accident or dies after a long stretch of illness. Tender words of comfort spoken, meals delivered, loving hugs and prayers are freely given. Then...the days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months and everything about who she was as a wife becomes a memory as she now faces the tasks of every day as a single woman once again. Without the literal, physical presence of her helpmate standing by her side, she faces the stark reality of discovering daily life on her own.

Watching my mother cope with the death of my father brought into sharp focus the lack of understanding of and the need for honor for widows. In truth, they are sisters, mothers, and daughters like each of us. Having the opportunity to sit at a lunch table with three widows, the question was presented to them, "What is one thing that you wish others understood the most about this time of transition?" Their answers pulled at my heart and left me sad. Every one of them stated, in some fashion, "Now that my husband is gone, I have been dropped like a hot potato." Their sense of aloneness and loneliness was overwhelming.

Bravely, Mom began reaching out to other widows and accepting invites from friends. It was my privilege, along with my siblings, to care for her. There is a wealth of information gleaned from a woman who is transitioning through this type of loss. Here are some ideas to keep in mind when a woman you love, a neighbor, friend, or church member is transitioning back into life as a single.

1. Don't assume that you "know" what she is going through. If she is willing to talk, ask her what this time is like for her...what it is she finds difficult or easy.
2. Make it a point to include her in social gatherings. Leaving room at a table to include a widow or purposefully seeking her out will help ease the sense of her being "dropped" now that she is single again.
3. Come along side and be willing to listen to her thoughts and feelings. Allowing her to decide what it is she is willing to voice and define for herself is a relief versus being told what to do now.
4. Pray with her. There is nothing more precious than two believers bowing their hearts before the Heavenly Father in prayer.
5. Remember even a brief phone call is a welcomed event. Just knowing she is thought of and remembered brings comfort.
6. Remind her of God's promise not to bring harm to her but to give her a future and a hope. My mom often said she was still here on earth because God had something for her to do yet. How true! It seems I learned more

about my mother and her faith in the seven months she was with me after dad's death than any other time.

7. Avoid introducing her to available men. So often we try to alleviate loss with replacements. Allow her the dignity of time and when ready, God is very able to bring someone to her or give her the courage to ask for help.
8. For the things she does not know how to do, help her with or connect her with people who do know how. EX: Financial concerns or repairs on her home.
9. Don't avoid her because of your own uncomfortable feelings. One of my most tender memories was the two of us weeping together as we talked about her grief.

James defines our most acceptable expression of faith in chapter 1, verse 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."* (NIV) May we not forget the distress that widows endure but respond with compassion. It is a part of the Father's way of affirming His character within us.

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