



Caring for Widows/Widowers in Light of the Coronavirus

“The widow/widower who is really in need and left alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.” 1 Timothy 5:5

Joan is an 80+ year-old widow. She wakes up on a Sunday morning, makes breakfast, reads her Bible, and prays for everyone. Joan cannot wait to gather with the people of God. She looks outside and it appears that a storm is on the horizon. Made uncomfortable by the thought of the rain, she decides to push through. She can make it.

Joan arrives at church, hugs her long-time best friend, and hugs people she just met with the same affection, assures the pastor that she is praying for him, and heads to find her seat. Joan spurs others on towards godliness as she waits for the service to begin. Though for many years she has been in pain, alone, and downcast, she boldly sings the songs of faith that have encouraged her over the years. The preaching of God’s Word edifies her. She responds to God’s Word by thanking the Lord that He is able to keep her from stumbling and will one-day present her blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy. The worship service ends.

On the way out of the church, though the sermon could have been better, she encourages the pastor and makes sure he hears that he needs to slow down and get some rest. She heads to lunch with friends, as this might be the only time she sits at a table with anyone else all week. The food and fellowship are delightful. After a long outing, she gets home and thinks to herself, “This was the best day.”

Stories like these are true of widows and widowers in local churches throughout the nation and the world. Their lives revolve around the church. They have lost their spouses and many friends, family has moved away, and the life of the church is much of what keeps them persevering until that day when they will see God as He is. Now, they feel even more isolated than ever due to COVID-19 and the social distancing it requires.

If they have any physical issue or come down with any type of other sickness, these widows and widowers are (understandably) reluctant to go to the doctor because they “are the most vulnerable demographic.” Precautions, fear, and even panic keep them inside and even more isolated and alone than usual. While they were already limited in terms of their social life, work, hobbies, family, and friends, now they are unable to participate in what is most dear to them. They feel the psalmist’s pain and longing as he grieves being away from the procession of the people of God as they go to worship the Lord and celebrate His infinite value (Psalm 42).

We are all longing for the decline and disappearance of COVID-19, but as you read your Bible, consider Joan and those like her who are desperately longing to once again hear, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.” For the psalmist, that meant going to the temple, but for Joan, that means gathering on Sunday with God’s people.

So how can we care for widows/widowers who are now experiencing even further social isolation?

1. Pray for Them

Print out a list of all the widows/widowers you know. Intercede on their behalf, asking the Lord to give them the grace to bring all their burdens to Him and to rest assured that He cares for them (Psalm. 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7). Ask the Lord to strengthen them in their inner being that they may know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge (Eph. 3:19). Pray that they will rest assured that the Lord will keep them and continue to sustain them until the day when there is no more sickness or sorrow and sorrow turns to joy (Psalm 139; Jude 24–25).

2. Call and Encourage Them

I spoke with a widow/widower earlier this week and when our conversation was ending, she said, “It is just so good to talk to someone.” There are so many older Christians in this situation. There is no reason during this time for a /widower not to hear from a pastor each week or a different church member each day. Call them, they might not have access to social media, use the numbers on our members’ directory. Your voice may be the only voice they hear all day – all week.

3. Get Food and Groceries for Them

There are places they have eaten for many years and can no longer go. They still love home-cooked meals. They will need groceries and may not feel comfortable having them delivered by an employee from a company they have never heard of. Obviously, out of the abundance of caution, you will need to implement sanitary measures. Hand sanitizer and gloves will be needed. It is also helpful if you have a way to contact family and let them know what you are doing.

4. Take Care of Household Tasks for them

Again, interaction here will require caution, but there are still home repairs and yards that need attention.

This is an incredible opportunity for the church to show that it cares for neighbours from the womb to the tomb. It is a great opportunity to honour senior saints and to show them that Jesus has not forgotten about them and neither have we. May we be found faithful in this time of uncertainty, to labour and toil with our hope set on the living God. May COVID-19 compel each of us to live each day looking forward to the final day when the dwelling place of God will again be with man and we will know the fullness of His joy, free from sin forever and ever.

Let us honour them. As Paul instructs us:

“Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need”

1 Timothy 5:3

Amen