

# Honor Widows (Part 2)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Right now, would you stand with me as we honor God's Word together again in 1 Timothy chapter 5, beginning in verse 3 and going through verse 16.

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.

She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach.

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. Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than 60 years of age, having been the wife of one husband 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. But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith.

[ 1 : 30 ] 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. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander.

For some have already strayed from Satan. 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.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? One of the great principles of the Protestant Reformation was the phrase, *Semper Reformanda*.

It's a Latin phrase that means, in English, always reforming. The idea is that Christians in churches should continually be reformed as they read and as they study the Bible, God's word.

The Holy Spirit uses the words he's inspired to reform the way we think and the way we believe. As he shows us that God's ways are better than our ways.

[ 2 : 51 ] Read about that in Romans 12, 2. There the Apostle Paul says, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable, and perfect.

When God saves a person, they are reborn. They are transformed from death to life. They are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who changes their thinking and their desires.

They want to know God more, and they want to know God more through studying his word. This transformation produces a reformation.

Colossians 3, 9 through 10, we read, Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices, speaking of this transformation, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed.

And I think we're seeing here of a reformation, a renewed, being renewed in the knowledge after the image of its creator. When we gather to worship, we gather to hear God's word, to sing songs informed by God's word, that we would be reformed by God's word.

[ 4 : 09 ] Colossians 3, 16 says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thanksgivings in your heart to God.

And so the Christian life is a transformed life in which the Holy Spirit uses the word of God to reform us, to shape us evermore into the image and likeness of Jesus.

In John 8, 31 through 32, Jesus said to those who believed in him, If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Later in John 15, he picked up that theme of abiding in him when he was meeting with his disciples, and he said, And so here we see again, God uses his words, his word, to prune us, to shape us, to reform us, so that we are healthy, productive, fruit-bearing branches.

So when we read God's word, there is a reforming action that should be taking place in our lives and in our churches as we seek not only to understand, but to adjust our lives to God's word so that we are in obedience with what he's instructed, with what he's commanded.

[ 5 : 55 ] 1 Timothy was written by the Apostle Paul, again inspired by the Holy Spirit, to Timothy, a young pastor in Ephesus. And he states very clearly his purpose for writing this letter in 1 Timothy 3, verses 14 through 15.

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar in the buttress of truth.

The church in Ephesus was in disorder, primarily due to false teachers who were spreading false doctrines throughout the church. And so Timothy's task was to bring reform, to bring order back to the church.

Part of the way that Paul tells him he needs to do that was to identify men to serve alongside of him as elders and some as deacons. And he was to then expel false teachers and their influence from the church.

Now in chapter 5, Paul gives further instructions to Timothy to pass along to the church, to bring order, to bring reformation.

[ 7 : 07 ] In verses 1 and 2 of chapter 5, if you remember, he encourages Timothy to confront members of the church when they sin, and he tells them how to do that, to treat them as family members.

And beginning in verse 3, Paul turns his attention to widows in the church, and he gives instruction on how the church is to care for them. And as I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, the Bible is full of examples that communicate God's special care for widows.

The problem, one of the problems in Ephesus was that in addition to the disorder created by false teachers or maybe because of their influence, the church neglected or was neglecting to care for widows as God had commanded them to in his word.

And so here, Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit again, writes instructions to the church to reform, among other things, their apparent lack of concern and care for widows in their church.

His instruction is intended to inform and reform the church so that it cares for widows the way that God cares for widows, the way that God commands his people to care for widows.

[ 8 : 22 ] And so the main idea for this morning's sermon is that the church must care for widows in the same way that God does. Church must care for widows in the same way that God does.

If you visit our church's website, maybe you've done that, what you've seen or what you would see is a phrase in big, bold, block letters at the very top that says, built on God's word.

That phrase communicates our belief as a church, as Highland Park Baptist Church, that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God.

It communicates our desire to be a pillar and a buttress of the truth. We want to know God's word, proclaim God's word, and obey God's word, which means adjusting whatever needs adjusting so that what we do as a church, what we prioritize as a church is in line with what God tells us in his word.

For example, we added an intercessory prayer time to our worship service because we saw in chapter 2 of 1 Timothy that Paul commanded Timothy to make prayer for all people a priority in the church's worship service.

[ 9 : 46 ] We reformed our worship service to include an intentional, regular time for intercessory prayer. In the same way, now as we continue in chapter 5, we need to evaluate whether we as a church care for widows in the same way that God commands us.

And as we continue here in verse 9 of this chapter, we'll see that widows aren't just to be cared for by the church, but they had a special ministry within the church.

Why does this matter? Why should you care? Well, you should care because if you're a Christian, God commands you to care. And that should be enough to cause you to care.

Like the church in Ephesus, we have widows in our church, and I wonder, do you, do we, do you know who they are, and do we support them and care for them like we should?

You should also care about this if you're a husband. The day may come when the Lord takes you home before your wife. And in such a case, you should be concerned, even now if you're a young man, that she has what she needs so that the church isn't burdened to provide for her should you pass on and go to be with the Lord.

[ 11 : 26 ] If you're a young person, you should care about this, whether you're in elementary school, middle school, or high school, because the time will come, may come, when your parents are widowed.

And you need to know that God's expectation is not that you send them off somewhere, but that you be prepared and ready and willing to receive them into your home and to care for them.

You need to understand the responsibility that God has given to you should a case arrive. And as a church, we are to reflect the character of Christ. We're not to reflect the character of our culture.

And often what we see in culture is that older people are not cared for. They're often the targets of scammers. And a lot of times what we see is that their children, their adult children, mooch off of them and deplete the limited resources that they have.

It can't be that way in the church. We need to care for them. We need to support them if they need it.

[ 12 : 35 ] And we need to let them know that there's a place for them here to serve the Lord. And we're glad they're here. We'll see today that God, instead of putting widows on the sidelines in the church, has an important assignment.

He has a ministry for widows in the church. Now, as I said a couple of weeks ago, I don't intend to leave out our widows because we care for you.

I think the principles here in our text this morning do apply to you in some ways, but the Bible makes a distinction and directly addresses widows here.

And so widowers, that doesn't mean that we're going to care for them and not for you. No way would that be the case. But because widows are expressly addressed here, that's what we're going to do.

But please know that we love you, we're here for you, and we want to support you too. If you're an unbeliever here this morning, you may think, this has nothing to do with me.

[ 13 : 43 ] Well, friend, it does because you are stepping into a family worship service. And you are here because God has brought you here. To hear this word, even this message on caring for widows applies to you because through it, you're going to hear the gospel.

You're going to hear about Jesus. You're going to hear about who he is and what he has done, and he has brought you here to hear that. And we hope that today would be the day of your salvation, that you would be a part of the family of God, that you would be a part of our family, that he would save you, transform you, and be reforming you into the image and the likeness of his son, Jesus Christ.

And so there's three ways that the church must care for widows in the same way as God. We saw the first way a couple of weeks ago. I'm going to quickly just recap that to refresh our memories and that the church is to extend support for those who are truly widows.

In these verses, Paul makes a distinction between widows with family members, meaning they still have living children and grandchildren, and widows who have no surviving family members or whose surviving family members may have abandoned them.

In this time and this place and in this culture, women didn't inherit their husband's wealth and possessions when he died. Those things typically went to the eldest son.

[ 15 : 11 ] Women also were rarely employed in this time and place. They had few ways of earning an income.

There also wasn't the kind of government assistance programs that we have in our day, in our time. They didn't have those things to be able to go to to look for financial support.

So if a woman's husband died and her son or her relatives chose not to provide for her or if she had no family at all, that woman was totally destitute.

She had nothing. She would have to beg on the streets for funds that she needed to meet her basic needs. And Paul says that such widows, if they are Christians, should receive support from the church.

Now what does this look like for us today? Well, to extend support to widows, to provide the church's resources to them instead of outsourcing their need to someplace else.

[16:20] If a widow who doesn't have any family is completely destitute, like in this case, comes to us as a church and says, hey, I have bills that I can't pay. I don't have anything to eat.

We shouldn't say, well, you know what? We hear that the Salvation Army has a food pantry. Or we hear that you can go down the street to Concern Center and they can help you with your bills. No, what they should hear us say is we are going to help you. We're not going to outsource ministry to some other place. We are commanded by God to help you and we are glad to do that. Look again with me at verse 8. Paul says, but if anyone does not provide for his relatives by blood or by law, that is, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

If a Christian refuses to care for a widow who is related to them, Paul says they are basically denying their faith. Their lack of concern and their lack of care demonstrates that the transformative power of saving faith in Jesus Christ is not evident in their lives.

[17:27] And so Christians should provide for their widowed relatives and not deplete the church's resources by disobeying God's command to do this for them, to meet this need.

Another application here, as I mentioned a couple weeks ago, is to have a plan. To have a plan should the time come if or when one of your parents is widowed.

This is another reason why I like to preach through books of the Bible verse by verse because things like this come up and they force us to think about things that we might not otherwise think about or might otherwise not want to think about.

God's expectation of you, Christian, is that you care for your parents, that you provide for your parents, that you support your parents should the time come when they need your help.

So talk to your spouse if you have one. Talk to your siblings if you have them. Be prepared. Have a plan. Have these discussions to know what you're going to do should that time come.

[18:40] In verses 9 through 10, now Paul gives the second way that the church must care for widows in the same way that God does and that's to enlist older widows for service in the church.

Enlist older widows for service in the church. I want to read verses 9 through 10 again. He says, Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less, excuse me, than 60 years of age, having been the wife of one husband, 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. Have you ever heard a song and you've heard a song a lot of times but you've misunderstood the lyrics?

A song you've heard, again, many times and you were convinced that the singer was singing words in that song that you later realized weren't actually the words he was singing?

When I was in high school, I was listening to a Garth Brooks song called Rodeo. Some of you guys might know that.

[19:51] In that song, Garth Brooks lists rodeo imagery as he describes a rodeo. And in one of those lines, he says, It's boots and chaps, it's cowboy hats, it's spurs, and latigo.

Instead of latigo, I was convinced that the words were let it go. In my mind, that made sense.

I'm picturing a cowboy in the chute on top of a bull. He's got his boots, he's got his chaps, he's got a cowboy hat, he's got spurs, he's ready to ride, and so he says, let it go.

So, so a friend of mine is singing this song and I'm hearing him singing it and he says, instead of let it go, he sings latigo.

And I'm a city boy and I've never heard the word latigo, I thought he just made something up and so I kind of laughed and I said, it's let it go, not latigo. And he said, no, it's latigo.

[20:55] And then he told, I said, well, what's latigo? And he said, latigo is a kind of horse. And I thought for years that, well, it's latigo and latigo means a kind of horse breed and then I realized that latigo is not a kind of horse breed.

It's the, it's the cinches, it's the leather cinches that are used on the horse's saddle. So what does any of this have to do with what I am preaching about?

Now, in the past, when I've read these verses, I've believed, I thought, that they were additional qualifications that Paul gave regarding widows who were seeking financial support from the church. But as I've studied this text more, I'm convinced that the list or the enrollment and the qualifications mentioned here describe widows who were enlisted to serve in the church in a specific way.

Just like how people get the lyrics of a song wrong, I think those who see this list as referring to who in the church is qualified to receive support have gotten it wrong.

[ 22 : 13 ] In the church in Ephesus, there were widows. There were godly women who had a ministry directed to other women and children in the church.

They also ministered indirectly to the leaders of the church by their positive influence over other women in the congregation. They were women who would have fulfilled the kind of ministry that Paul commanded of older women in Titus 2, 3 through 5.

There, we read, older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good and so train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands that the word of God may not be reviled.

This, I believe, was how the early church understood verses 9 through 10. In the late 1st century and early 2nd century, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Tertullian, early church fathers, wrote about older women, widowed women, having this kind of ministry in the church.

A 3rd century document known as the Apostolic Constitutions also refers to a specific order of widows who had a ministry within the church.

[ 23 : 42 ] So what I see here, what makes the best sense to me, is Paul transitioning from those widows who qualify to receive support from the church in verse 8 to a new topic in verse 9 in which he specifies the requirements for widows to be enlisted to serve in this ministry that was beneficial to the church.

Well, what did they do? I think they did a lot of the things that women in the church do today. John MacArthur is helpful. He said that their duties surely included helping with the baptism of women, visiting the sick, visiting prisoners, teaching and discipling younger women, helping younger women rear and nurture their children, and providing hospitality for visitors and strangers.

They may have also assisted in placing orphans into proper Christian homes. That was a very important ministry in the Roman world since orphans or abandoned children would wound up as slaves and often as prostitutes or gladiators.

With their own husbands gone and their children grown, these women had the time to pursue such essential ministries. So, I believe these widows were enrolled by the church to serve in these ways. And the ministry they did was important. And so, Paul gives specific qualifications as he did for elders, as he did for deacons in chapter 2 so that they ministered effectively.

[ 25 : 12 ] The first requirement was that she be not less than 60 years of age. In this time, in this place, 60 was considered retirement age.

And in this culture, again, it was a time that they believed to sort of step away from the world and spend time in contemplation.

People didn't live as long back then as they do today. So, this was viewed as kind of an age of contemplating life and maybe sharing those insights gained from that contemplation, that wisdom with younger generations.

A woman who met this requirement would be less tempted to abandon her commitment to the Lord in the church being of this age, being ready for this kind of thing.

Second, she was to have been the wife of one husband. In the Greek, this literally reads a one man woman, which matches the requirement for elders and deacons to be a one woman man.

[ 26 : 26 ] Now, in verse 14, Paul commands younger widows to remarry, so his intent here isn't to exclude widows who have been married more than once, widowed more than once. A widow who was a one-man woman is someone who was faithful in her devotion to her husband while he lived, just as was the qualification for elders and for deacons.

A widowed woman who met this requirement modeled God's command for marriage and thus was able to be a good role model for the younger women in the church.

Third, a widow was to have a reputation for good works. There had to be evidence, there had to be fruit of her abiding in Christ by bearing that spiritual fruit which could be observed in how she raised her children, how she showed hospitality to other people, how she washed the feet of the saints.

Washing people's feet was the job of the lowest ranking slave in the house. And if you're familiar with Bible times, you know that the roads were dirty, were dusty, were muddy.

Sometimes the road was just a dirt path and people wore sandals or maybe they didn't have sandals and they walked barefoot. They didn't have closed-toed shoes like we do. So all this to say

is that people's feet were dirty, filthy, gross, and so a person visiting a house with servants would have their feet washed by one of them.

[ 28 : 09 ] And that act of washing feet was a metaphor which communicated a person's humility, their humility of character, which was exemplified in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who washed the feet of his disciples and commanded them to go and to do the same to one another.

So the widows eligible to serve in this ministry must have demonstrated a Christ-like humility in her life as she followed the Lord. She was to care for the afflicted and devote herself to every good work.

We have an example of a widow like this in Luke chapter 2 verses 36 through 38. There we read a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher.

She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin and then as a widow until she was 84. She did not depart from the temple worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day and coming up at that very hour when Jesus was being dedicated by his parents.

She began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. One of the first people to offer praise and honor Jesus as the promised Messiah was a widow who was faithfully devoting herself for a long time to serving the Lord.

[ 29 : 38 ] She received this good news that the Messiah had come. She received it with praise and she shared it with everyone who was around her.

She was old. She was probably past the age of 90 but she wasn't done praising the Lord. She wasn't done serving the Lord. She wasn't done telling other people about the good things that God had done and was doing.

Truthfully, these qualifications should be qualities that every Christian strives for as they seek to be more like Jesus who himself was singularly devoted to his bride, the church, who showed hospitality ultimately by preparing a place for us in our heavenly home.

And he did that by dying in our place for our sins on the cross. In his earthly life, Jesus showed that he cared for those who were afflicted.

He healed people of all kinds of diseases. He touched those who culture deemed as being untouchable and he healed them. He healed them of their infirmities.

[ 30 : 52 ] He cast out demons and he brought dead people back to life. Ultimately, he was afflicted himself on the cross when he was nailed to it and as he drank the cup of God's wrath, again, for our sins that we've committed against him.

Jesus, as I mentioned, washed the disciples' feet. The Most High became the servant of all. And we should all be striving to be like him.

We should all strive and desire to be like Jesus to each other. But here Paul specifically notes that widows were to meet these qualifications if they were to serve in this important ministry in the church.

And they were needed to serve others in the congregation. The pastor of the church that I served in Leavenworth, maybe about a week ago, he posted a picture on Facebook about a woman in the congregation whose name was Shirley.

And Shirley joined the church about a year before I left to come to Highland Park. And she's now 90 or just over 90 years old. And since I've left and I've been here for about eight years, she has served on that church's baptism team.

[ 32 : 13 ] And I want to read to you what he shared about her, just this testimony, because she's getting ready to move and I guess fully retire, I don't know. He said, she comes in early to set up rooms, distribute towels, and pray with those preparing for baptism.

Not only that, she'd come in each week and spend over an hour resetting the back of our chairs with visitor cards, pens, and envelopes. She would always note how so many visitor cards would get scribbled on by kids.

But instead of complaining about that, she would say, I'm just thankful there's so many kids here.

He concluded that post by saying, service may look different as you age, but it's never an excuse to give up.

We have some women like that in our church, and I hope that we'll continue to have women like that in our church. I don't know that we need to make a list like the one Timothy had.

maybe that's something we can pray about, but what I do know is that our older women, God says to you through his word this morning that he has a place for you to serve in his church, and that he desires for you to be at work serving in his church.

[ 33 : 37 ] knowledge, because there's something that you have that you may take for granted and not think that you have. You have a wealth of knowledge and experience and wisdom through what you've experienced, through what you've gone through.

You have a wealth of knowledge, experience, and wisdom, and you have younger generations of women who would be tremendously blessed to receive some of that wisdom, some of that experience that you've gained, the insights from that.

And I hope that you'll be wanting to share with them that the younger generations would be blessed by what the Lord has shown you and taught you.

Our church is better. Our church is better when you serve in the ways that are listed here. Last week, Dr.

Fisher walked us through Ephesians 2, 1 through 9. I want to read verse 10. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

[ 35 : 05 ] And so, sister, and to all of us, we need to be reminded this morning that if the Lord has you here, if you're here and you're alive, he has you here to continue the work.

He's got good things left for you to do before he calls you home. So continue to praise him.

Continue to serve him and know him and make him known because none of us retires from serving Jesus.

And now third, the third way we support and care for widows is to encourage younger widows to remarry. Not all widows were suited for this kind of ministry.

The older widows were to undertake in the church. And so Paul addresses them in verse 11 through 12, but refused to enroll younger widows for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. It appears that some younger widows had taken some kind of vow maybe or had given their word, given some kind of a promise that they were going to devote themselves to this ministry in the church.

[ 36 : 22 ] Perhaps in their grief, in their loss, over their husband at the time and for a while, they couldn't imagine remarrying, they couldn't imagine moving on in any other way without them, and so they committed themselves to this kind of ministry in the church.

But after a time, the prospects of living the rest of their lives unmarried and maybe without children became less appealing and so they broke their vow or their promise.

In addition, Paul adds in verse 13, besides that they learned to be idlers going about house to house and not only idlers but gossips and busybodies saying what they should not say. And again, it seems like this widow's ministry served other widows in the church and ministered to sick people. Perhaps they visited Christians in prison and so they probably had a lot of information about members of the church as they went and did these kinds of visitations.

And it could be that these visits provided opportunity to pry a little more into the lives of the members of their church and with that maybe the temptation to share news with those who didn't really need to hear it or details with those who didn't really need to know them.

[ 37 : 41 ] As Christians, I think we're pretty good at hiding the fact that we're trying to be gossip when we say that, you know, hey, this person needs prayer. And then you go on and you add, not all the time, but you go on and add da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da some details, some things that you heard maybe secondhand that aren't really beneficial and you probably should have just left it at this person needs prayer.

And so we need to be careful about this as well. But Paul noticed this. He said it was not a good thing for them. This was not good for the church. And so in verses 14 and 15 he says, I would have a younger widow marry, bear children, manage their household, and give the adversary no occasion for slander for some have already strayed after Satan.

Again, we know that this church faced internal opposition from false teachers and so it appears that in straying away from the truth and to Satan they were influenced by these false teachers and they were going with them or they were listening to them and agreeing with them.

Paul advises them to make better use of their time. And so no doubt he would encourage them to not just remarry but to marry a Christian man who would be a godly leader and a discipler in the home.

The Bible gets personal. It gets personal. And that's a good thing. It talks about things we would rather not talk about. It says things that we in our sinful flesh sometimes would rather it not say. [ 39 : 21 ] What it says here is that younger widows have God's permission to get remarried. You don't have to get remarried but you can.

I think of a young woman who used to be in Danny and I's youth group and she's probably in her mid-twenties now.

A little older than that. Her husband was a Marine. They had been married for just a couple of years, maybe two or three years before he died tragically.

And she's obviously heartbroken. They didn't have any children. But you could just see in the things that she would post and the things that she would say that her heart was crushed.

And she's still mourning. And she's still grieving. The question I would ask, is that the way that God would want a young woman to live the rest of her life?

[ 40 : 31 ] In grief and in mourning. And it seems that the answer from his word is no. It's not his will for that to be the case.

But we've got to look at these things as individual cases. So on the flip side of this, it would be wrong for us to tell a younger woman whose husband had recently passed away.

It's okay. You can get remarried. It would be wrong for us to say in the case of the young lady that I mentioned, you know what? Just stop mourning and go get married.

We've got to be prayerful. We have to be sympathetic. We need to care. And if that time comes where this woman is wrestling with that, maybe feeling like she's betraying her husband or something otherwise, then we can point her to God's word and we can show her what it says and we can let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

Paul closes this section of his instruction for honoring widows by reiterating the important principle that he's already stated. Verse 16, if any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them.

[ 41 : 57 ] Let the church not be burdened so that it may care for those who are truly widows. So in case we missed it, he says it to us again, that the command, the expectation of God is that we care for widows the way that he cares for widows.

And so how should we adjust ourselves according to what we've read this morning or heard this morning? I think it's always be reforming. Because you know what?

It's easy to just read these verses and say, okay, I see what it says, but I don't know what to do about it. Or maybe not even to care about it.

But when it comes to what God says about widows or what God says about anything else, we need to read it and not just read it and forget about it, but study God's word.

What does this mean? What did it mean then? What does it mean now? And to be praying about it. Because God's given his word for a reason to reveal himself to us, but to also tell us how we are to live our lives for him.

[ 43 : 08 ] And so when you read the Bible, always be praying and studying it and thinking about how do I need to reform my ways?

And as a church, how do we need to reform what we're doing so that what we are doing and how we are living and what we care about matches what God says in his word?

So that might be a good thing for you just as you do your Bible study, just to make that prayer. God, show me what I need to see. Convict me of what sin that I need convicting of.

Reform me, my mind, my heart, that I would be obedient to you and your ways. And if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, friend, you don't need reforming first as much as you need. You are in desperate need of transformation. Knowing that you are a sinner and that your sins have been committed against the holy God.

[ 44 : 17 ] And the consequences of that sin is an eternity apart from him forever in hell. But God in his love and his grace and his care has sent his son Jesus, the son of God, who lived the sinless life that we could not live and who died on the cross in our place for our sins.

That by faith in him, we're saved, we're redeemed, we're forgiven, we are adopted into his family and we receive eternal life.

And I hope that you would know him and that you would know how good it is to know him. Let's pray. Lord, we pray for our church and God, I'm thankful for the commitment that is here amongst our elders, amongst our leaders, amongst our membership that, Lord, we want a church that is built on your word.

And God, I'm thankful that in a time when many, many people, many churches who say their churches are neglectful of your word, Lord, I believe that it's our desire to know your word and to apply your word to our lives and to our church.

And that's a wonderful thing. And God, I just pray for more of that. I pray that as we read your word, as we study the Bible, that Lord, we would be reformed by your spirit, that we would think the ways that we ought to think, that we would do the things that we ought to do, and that we would desire to do that for your glory and to please you because, God, you're worthy, as we've sung this morning.

[ 46 : 09 ] Lord, we're thankful that you have given us your word. We're thankful that you have given us the privilege of being your ambassadors in this world that is lost. Lord, that you've given us the privilege of being the light that shines in the darkness.

God, we're supposed to do things differently in our church community than we see in the community of our culture. And so, God, help us to be obedient. Help us to be bold and faithful in that obedience, Lord, that you would be glorified through our church and in our lives.

And we pray for your help in doing this. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.