



Widows Harvest MINISTRIES

In All Things Give Thanks to Our Heavenly Father In Christ Jesus Name | Spring Update 2018

Dear Friends and Supporters:



Greetings and Expressions of Thanksgiving!

It's hard to believe spring is winding down and we have almost reached the beginning of our summer work/mission's schedule. The first group we work with is on May 30th and our last group ends on August 4th. Needless to say it will be a long, hot summer, but one that holds great promise for all that we will be able to do for widows and "causing their hearts to sing with joy" (Job 29:13).

June 1st will mark the end of our 30th year as a ministry and the beginning of our 31st year. It is still so hard for me to believe that this many years has passed and the care of widows as well as the recognition for their ministry calling is still mostly non-existent throughout the world.

In I Timothy 5:9-10 it says "No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord's people, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds."

When I first started Widows Harvest I was told on more than one occasion by a number of different pastors that only widows that met these requirements should be considered for receiving assistance. I never really felt like these two passages were meant to be understood, though, as a list of qualifications for whether a widow should be helped or not. Thanks to a Bible study by John MacArthur that he released around that same time called, "Caring For Widows," that I had confirmation that these 2 passages were prescribing something altogether different.

The passages preceding verses 9 & 10 are, however, what actually presents us with the qualifications for those widows who are to receive assistance. Verse 3-4, for instance, tells us that we are to "Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. 4.) But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God."

So, what does this mean if a widow has family but they won't take care of her? It should mean that the church steps in to care for her. Unfortunately, as is often the case this passage is used instead to justify why it should not use its own resources to care

for her.

Paul ends this discourse in verse 7 by instructing Timothy to "Give the people these instructions, so that no one may be open to blame." And then he immediately follows this up with a very severe warning for those who do not care for their relatives, which in the context it has been written is also meant to include any widows in their family. Verse 8, "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

And because this letter to Timothy is considered to be a "pastoral book," because it is addressing the qualifications for serving as officers (deacons and elders (overseers) of the church, it is reasonable to believe that this warning equally applies to us as a corporate body: first, for those widows who have no family members are to be cared for by their church families, and secondly, for those widows who do have family, but their families either can't or won't care for them, then the responsibility for their care should also fall to the church.

It is also important for us to understand that the Greek word for widow in the New Testament defines a widow based only on the condition of being "bereft, or all alone," and neither the circumstances that caused it, nor is her age listed as a factor. What this means is that single mothers should be regarded by us as scripturally defined widows, and subsequently their children regarded as "the fatherless."

Our churches, today, not to mention our nation as a whole, has more than reached a critical mass crisis point when it comes to the numbers of widows, young and old alike being overlooked, especially when it comes to younger widows (single mothers) with children; who should be legitimately regarded by us as scripturally defined widows and their children as "the fatherless."

It makes me think of the book of Ruth (who was a young widow) when Boaz wanted to "redeem" Naomi, her widowed mother-in-law, so that he could marry Ruth. Boaz, as a relative of Naomi, was second in line to be her Guardian-Redeemer, which meant that Naomi's relative that was first in line had the first right of refusal. So, Boaz arranged to meet this relative, who is never named (which actually speaks volumes to us in the way that God viewed his actions), at the city gate along with ten elders he

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brought with him.

At first, when Boaz presents the opportunity for this relative to be the one to “redeem” Naomi, the relative is more than willing until Boaz tells him that if he does redeem her he will also have the responsibility for the care of Ruth. When he hears this, though, he quickly backs out. This is his response to Boaz, Ruth 4:6 “At this, the guardian-redeemer said, “Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.”

Boaz, as we now know, did redeem Naomi and married Ruth, and they had a son named, “Obed,” which means servant, and who was also in the lineage of Christ. Obed was the father of Jesse and Jesse was the father of King David. Just an interesting note, in the English language the first part of the word “obedience” is “obed.” We can’t be obedient to

God without first becoming a servant.

After ministering with widows for as long as I have, now, one of the things I have been able to observe with those whose responsibility it is to care for widows is not so dissimilar to what Boaz encountered with the unnamed guardian-redeemer who was first in line to redeem Naomi. It has often appeared the case to me that our priorities, both individually and corporately, cause us to have the same fears and reservations that Naomi’s relative did when he found out that he would also be responsible for Ruth, “we likewise seem to be afraid that we will endanger what it is that we already have.” As if, whatever it is that we already have came to us apart from God. Which calls into question who, or what, it is that we are really placing our trust in.

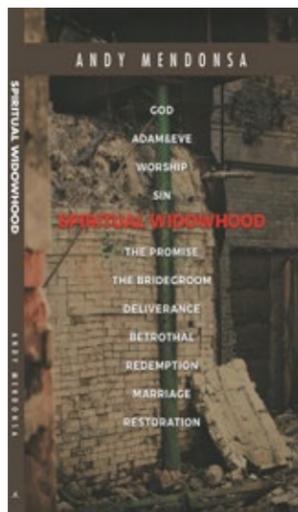


Office of Widow

This is why I believe we are desperately in need of not just recognizing the “Office of Widow” (my title for it) prescribed in I Timothy 5:9-10, but also implementing it. The Greek word for “list” in verse 9, is “katalego,” and it is only used in this one instance in the entire New Testament, and it means “of those widows who held a prominent place in the church and exercised a certain superintendence over the rest of the women, and had charge of the widows and orphans supported at the public expense.”

It would be hard to know how many times I have heard it said, either in a Bible study or in a sermon, that the older women should teach the younger women. Of course, if you take this age of 60 years and older in verse 9 for those widows who qualify to serve in the “Office of Widow,” it now seems more than obvious that this Office is intended to be for that very purpose.

Spiritual Widowhood



Since the publication of “Spiritual Widowhood” (www.spiritualwidowhood.com) in February 2017, although it has pretty much flat-lined here in America, it seems to be having an impact in Africa through Pastor Joshua Atieno and his wife Abigail, who are the Directors for Widows Harvest Africa. Two new satellite centers have been opened up; one in Lagos, Nigeria and the other in Tororo, Uganda. Abigail has actually moved to Tororo to oversee this new widow’s ministry and prayer center. Numbers of widows have accepted Jesus as a result of the teachings based on this book as well as there often being as many as 500 widows gathering for prayer. Prayer that can go on for days, with widows taking 8 hour shifts at a time around the clock.

At the headquarters of Widows Harvest Africa, in Miwani, Kenya, Joshua has also been very busy conducting training seminars for pastors also based on “Spiritual Widowhood.” Although, the purpose of the book was not specifically aimed at countering the wide spread movement associated with “prosperity theology” it seems to be having the effect of exposing it for many of it’s falsehoods. Of course, those Christian leaders who have bought into these false teachings are the ones who are most vocally opposed to what Joshua and Abigail have been teaching/training. Especially, for promoting the Office of Widow, which they are calling the “Order of Anna”

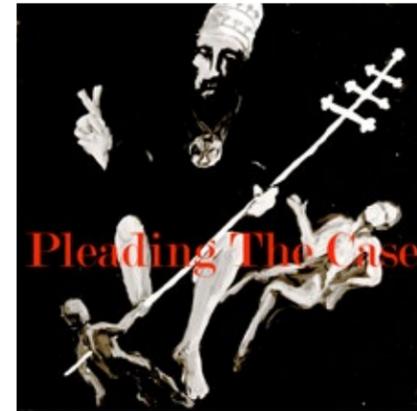
(Anna the Prophetess, Luke 2:36-38), resulting in the false accusations for being a cult.

Prosperity Theology has always struck me as nothing more than a pyramid based business model. Those who lead the way, or get in on the ground floor of a business based on such a model as this, are the ones that reap all the low-lying fruit that is readily available and ripe for the picking. Those who come afterwards, though, seeing the prosperity of those who benefited from all the low-lying fruit think they will be able to achieve the same success. Sadly, the only fruit remaining is far less attainable, but that realization, if it comes at all, is often too late and sometimes the personal kingdom harm it has caused to those individuals has been irreparable.

The obscene amount of wealth that has been acquired by those pastors and Christian Leaders who have gotten in on the ground floor of this false teaching that claims this is what God wants for all of us, is what has deceived so many. Jesus, and the life he modeled for us before he offered up his life, as well as the disciples and the lives they modeled for us after Jesus had ascended into heaven, lies in such stark contrast.

In order to justify these lifestyles, though, requires falsely reasoning that we can be under both covenants at the same time. The first covenant being the one that God made with Israel, beginning with Abraham and based on the law, and the new covenant, based on grace, through Christ offering up his life on our behalf. Thus, nullifying the first covenant. If we do not accept this, then it gives license, as we have seen with those who have adopted the precepts of “prosperity theology,” to be able to justify the creation of a hybrid Christian faith that pulls from both covenants, replacing the denial of self for one centered on the pleasing of self (Romans 15:1-13).

Pleading The Case



their greatest priority for concern as the oppressed: the fatherless and the widows. That is exactly what James is telling us in James 1:27 when he says “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, [and] to keep oneself unstained by the world.”

First, the word “religion” essentially means “worship,” which should immediately change our understanding for the level of critical importance that we should view this passage. “Pure and undefiled worship in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress. The second thing of equal importance is that the last line is not meant to present us with another completely separate list for what each of us might think we must either do, or not do, in order to keep from being stained by the world.

Well, I have now done something that I never thought I would do, I have started a podcast and it’s called “Pleading The Case” (www.pleadingthecase.com).

The title comes from Isaiah 1:17 “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the causes of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

It is easy to read this passage and think that Isaiah is giving Israel a list of 5 things they should be doing in order to please God, but that isn’t what he is doing at all. He is really only telling them to do one thing here, but that one thing has two parts. Look what he says at the beginning of this passage “Learn to do right and to seek justice. Immediately following this he tells them that in order to “do right and seek justice” they have to “defend the oppressed.” It is only after he has told them “doing right and seeking justice” means “defending the oppressed” that he tells them who should be considered

This last line in James 1:27, just like the first part of Isaiah 1:17, could, and has, been so easily mistaken as a list requiring us to imagine for ourselves what should be included on it, but in the case of James 1:27, the word “and” does not appear in the original Greek text, which is why in some translations (but not all of them. Some apparently don’t seem to think it necessary) the word “and” is in brackets.

After over 25 years of studying James 1:27 there is little doubt in my mind that, just like the first part of Isaiah 1:17, the last line in this passage is meant to be understood as “in order to keep oneself unstained by the world we have to care for the widows and the fatherless. In the same way that Isaiah tells Israel that in order to “do right and to seek justice they must defend the oppressed, with the oppressed being identified as the widows and the fatherless,” James is literally telling us that, as Christ’s bride, a bride that God desires to

remain “pure and undefiled,” caring for such as these keeps us from being in an “unfaithful” relationship with the world. In other words, idolatry is really the neglect of those such as the widows and the fatherless, because of what our time and resources are taken up with instead, which is the exact opposite of the way that we typically look at or define “idolatry.

For instance, every time God accuses Israel of being unfaithful, we view her unfaithfulness to mean that she had turned to the worship of idols. Yet, in each instance this happens, it is brought to Israel’s attention that she has forgotten about the plight of the widows and the fatherless, or those who are in similar need of justice and defending like in the passage already mentioned in Isaiah 1:17, but also all of Zechariah chapter 7. In other words, not caring for such as these, is idolatry, because they are the physical representation of the fall itself.

Our condition apart from Jesus is that of spiritual widowhood and fatherlessness. When we accept Jesus’ proposal of marriage, we are betrothed to him and, according to Jewish marriage traditions, to be betrothed is to be considered already married even though the wedding ceremony hasn’t taken place yet. It also means, that once we are betrothed to Jesus we are instantly adopted into our heavenly Father’s family and sealed with the Holy Spirit. So, to pass by the widow and the fatherless is literally saying to God, who sent his only son to us in our distress as the spiritually widowed and fatherless in order to deliver, redeem and ultimately restore us, that we have forgotten what he has done on our behalf. How is that not idolatry as well as spiritual adultery?

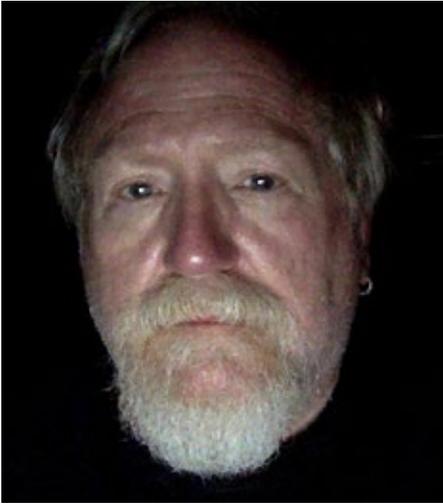


The Church Like Eve

So, the reason behind starting this new podcast, “Pleading The Case,” is for it to be a companion resource for the book “Spiritual Widowhood. It doesn’t follow the chronological order of the book, but many of the episodes will address topics included in it. The first episode, “The Church Like Eve,” is really meant to be an introduction to this podcast. So, even though it is almost an hour and a half long, it will explain more fully its overall purpose. Following this first, introductory, episode a case is presented in a multipart series, with three episodes already completed and now available (working on part four in the series) entitled: “The Church As Last Eve – Proving Jesus Came To Redeem A Bride.”

This series, based on a study and subsequent booklet I put together years ago called “A Promise In The Garden,” compares the creation of Eve account in Genesis 2:21-15, with passages of scripture in the New Testament that directly correlate with the account of Jesus coming to redeem a bride/church and why this is crucially important for us to know and understand in the same way it was equally crucial for the early church in Corinth to know and understand based on Paul’s second letter to them in chapter 11:2-3 “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. 3.) But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (NIV)

A Final Plea



The first part of our mission statement is to “Plead The Case of The widow.” All of our newsletters, our Facebook page, our website, the book “Spiritual Widowhood” and now the podcast “Pleading The Case,” are for this specific purpose.

When I started this ministry 30 years ago on June 1, 1987, I had exactly \$25 a month in committed support, or \$300 a year. Our expenses last year were 1000 times that amount, and should be about the same this year. Whereas, until 1995 I was the sole employee of WHM, today, we now have 5 full-time employees (with 3 of them working full-time meeting widow’s home repair and lawn care needs) and will have 4 interns working with us over the summer plus an estimated 500 or more volunteers.

What typically occurs for many churches and ministries like us is that around mid-May financial support begins to drastically drop off and really doesn’t pick back up until around Thanksgiving.

As many of you already know the only fundraising we really do, if you can even call it that, is to put out two newsletter/updates a year and to post as much of our ongoing ministry activities on our Facebook page. So many people have expressed to me over the years how surprised and also refreshing that they don’t get constantly bombarded with requests from us for funding. In fact, if you go to our website, it actually takes a little bit of searching to even find the link for donating to us online.

Also, on the new podcast website page, you won’t find a donation button on it, or any advertisements for the purpose of generating income. Even though we need support for our overall operating costs, support is not the tail that wags the dog for us. It is just a necessary reality, but not the basis, on any level, for measuring our success.

Do you know what I believe to be the true measure of ministry success, that is, if it were even possible to measure it? That lives are being transformed, and not just the lives of the widows we serve, but our lives as well as all the volunteers’ lives coming out to serve with us.

And do you know what the actual cost of ministry is for all of us? It is the cost to self, when we are willing to invest our lives, especially on a personally engaged level, into the life of at least one other person with the outcome being the transformation of both of our lives.

In Matthew 6:21 Jesus tells his disciples, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be found.” Which actually makes it relatively easy for us to inventory, both personally and corporately, all that we consider to be “treasure, or our treasury,” in order to really find out where our hearts are and not just where we tell everyone, including God, that they are. And just know that I am not pointing a finger at anyone when I say this, and even if you don’t believe me, and you feel that I have pointed a finger at you, just remember that whenever we point a finger at someone else there will always be three fingers pointing back at us.

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Mendonsa'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Andy Mendonsa
Servant Director
Widows Harvest Ministrie