9A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, 10having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work.

Paul gives an extensive list of the qualities needed for a woman with an official position in the church. We read earlier, *she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day.* She not to have responsabilities of raising chidren and grandchildren but be able to devote herself to prayer and meeting the needs of the body. She was to *have a reputation for good works*, *shown hospitality to strangers and assisted those in distress.* These women had functioned as the wife of an elder or deacon and *devoted herself to every good work.* Her character was that of a godly woman, not a *gossip or a busybody. 1 Tim 5:13* 

She was a woman of prayer and good works, and a senior citizen, not less than sixty years old. It is also interesting, she also have been married, having been the wife of one man, and a mother, brought up children. It is obvious most women did not meet these criteria. It seems when Paul talked earlier of elders and deacons and now widows he was implying that the church must not just fill offices with anybody, irrespective of character, but must discern godly qualities. In the book of Acts, the apostles chose seven men, men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. By implication the church must look for character, spiritual maturiy, wisdom and the ability to complete needed responsibilities, a devotion to good works.

This list excluded younger widows, they needed to still seek to be married.

11But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married, 12thus incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge. 13At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention. 14Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach; 15for some have already turned aside to follow Satan. 16If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed. 1 Tim 5:11-16

Younger widows might not be able to keep their vows to minister, they want to get married. That would mean they would continue to minister to the needs of the church, they would have to meet the needs of a husband and children. This is not saying that younger women could not minister, act as a deacon but not be supported by the church. There was also the danger of these younger widows being idle, busybodies, and gossips. This would not be healthy for the church and would could cause divisions in the church. These are very practical instructions for the body of Christ, the fellowship of believers. They are in line with Paul's statements in 1 Thessalonians 5, Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22abstain from every form of evil. 1 Thess 5:21

17The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 1 Tim 5:17,18

Paul now makes a transition to elders. He talked of the qualifications of overseers (elders) and deacons in chapter three. He began, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. It is good to desire and strive to be a godly in the church leader. This is a high goal, a good work. Here he states the elders is worthy of double honor. It seens Paul believes in paying ministers especially those who preach and teach. It is interesting that he didn't lay claim to this right himself. He believed it was an honor to preach and teach, to be an apostle of the gospel of Christ.

7For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, 8nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. 10For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 2 Thess 3:7-11

The quality of not being idle or busibodies is as relevent for ministers and elders as it is for widows. Paul wished to be an example to other believers. He didn't feel he was owed a living but with labor and hardship kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden on other believers. He said, if you don't work you don't eat, if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. Here again was a command not to live an undisciplined life or be a busybody. So even though Paul believed it was good to support elders, the laborer is worthy of his wages, he considered it a privilege to not be a burden on the church.

19Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. 20Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. 1 Tim 5:19,20

The behavior of church leaders is to be above reproach. They are not above the Law and must not live by the same standard as other believers. There have been occasions when leaders acted above and in violation of the Law. They have felt they were too gifted to fail, too important to God's purposes to be judged for their indiscretions. An example of an indiscretion would be having an affair while a minister. Such behavior should never be allowed in the church and believers in the church are responsible to stand up to the leader who has sinned. Paul presents the proper way to confront an accusation. Believers in the church be willing to discipline offender even if they are elders. This is not easy. No discipline is easy, we learn this when we have to deal with our own children. But we must do this so the rest of the body will be *fearful of sinning*, not wanting to be found out.

This is good advice because leaders need to live as examples to the flock and not be above the law. If this rule were not followed the church would end up being lead by personalities devoid of godly conduct. Recent church history has examples of sinful behavior on the part of leaders. Jimmy Swaggart was an evangelist who was confronted for sin.

In 1988, Swaggart was implicated in a sex scandal involving a prostitute that resulted initially in his suspension, and ultimately defrocking, by the Assemblies of God.

Swaggart chose to leave the Assemblies as a result of their discipline and with him a sizable portion of their missions supporter. But I saw it as a very godly example of the right of the church, believers, to judge its leaders. Judgement begins with the house of God.

17For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins

with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? 19Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. 1 Peter 4:17-19

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. This is a standard of accountability in both the Old and New Testament. A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. 1 Deut 19:15, 2 Corinthians 13:1 This principle that establishes safety and order, shared accountability. There is protection here for the body of believers, making no man above the law. There is also safety for the leader/elder. Hearsay and gossip are not to be used to discredit a man of noble character.

21I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. 22Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin. 1 Tim 5:19-22

Paul wants there to be order in the church; leadership in the form of elders, but responsibility on the part believers, *doing nothing in a spirit of partiality*. There is a need for leaders and God supplies those leaders, but there is a priesthood of believers.

27Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. 28And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. 29All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? 30All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? 31But earnestly desire the greater gifts. 1 Cor 12:27-31

Christ is working in each believers to become a spiritual house, a temple of His Spirit. Leaders aren't to lord it over.

4And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4,5

25And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' 26"But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. Luke 22:25,26

Study is the responsibility of every believer. Paul admonishes Timothy, *Study to shew thyself approved unto God*, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. The believer must self-govern their own spiritual life. Like the family adds stability to society, godly living by believers brings unity and health to the body. If we see a brother caught in a fault we are to go to them with to or three witnesses but it is so much better for believers to self-regulate our behavior. We must keep in mind God is always aware of our behavior and our loving God, our Savior Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit witness everything we do and the *truth will come forth*. We live saved by grace but at the same time as disciples of the Most Holy God, living for His Glory.