



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR JUNE 7, 2013

## THE REACH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

*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. (1 Timothy 5:4, NIV)*

AS LINKS FELLOWSHIPS THROUGH THE YEARS HAVE MOVED from being chiefly Amen's gatherings to including many more women, both in mixed groups and women's groups, we find ourselves paying attention to a broader swath of Scripture—and by this “paying attention” I mean getting our hands dirty with the work prompted there.

We have a tendency, like golfers who talk only about the good parts of their generally suspect game, to emphasize the directives of Scripture that we are already accomplishing or that we deem “more important.”

Righteousness, when we hold it up as the topic of the day, collects the “biggies”: Godward acts of worship, sexual purity, truth-telling, an arrest of covetousness.

Matters like widow care, though, strike us as rather minor. These aren't really what make us “right with God,” are they?

It is interesting that both Paul and James thought so highly of widow care that they discussed it in the context of well-practiced religion. While Paul wrote to Timothy that widow care was possibly the responsibility of all brothers and sisters in the church, he put forth family members as the “first responders” of widow care, those who were charged to put their “religion into practice.” Care for one's family is basic training in righteousness!

James went even further in his language, stating that religion that is “pure and faultless” is marked by the care of widows and orphans, alongside maintaining one's purity in a polluted world. In other words, little things can be quite big.

This week I sat with one of those widowed women in a Links Fellowship. She looked at me and said, “It's hard. There's not one thing that's the same.” I'd like to add this to all the things that are different for women like her: the sudden, kind care of her friends in Christ, those who know that it is truly righteous to stand by those who have great needs.

### Opening questions: Little things

What small things make a big difference on the golf course? How do these add to your enjoyment of the experience or improve your results?

### The cause of the widow

*Read Isaiah 1:15-20.* What place is the widow given in this sweeping passage on righteousness? Who else's cause is to be defended?

*Read Proverbs 15:25.* How does this passage reverberate with God's priorities?

*Read Luke 20:45-47.* How did the teachers of the law mask their unrighteousness with religion? What was their specific sin identified in verse 47?

### A heart to do right

*Read 1 Kings 17:7-24, 2 Kings 4:1-7, and Luke 7:11-15.* How were widows cared for in each of these passages? What do we see in the hearts of Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus in these scenes? How do our own hearts lead to righteous acts?