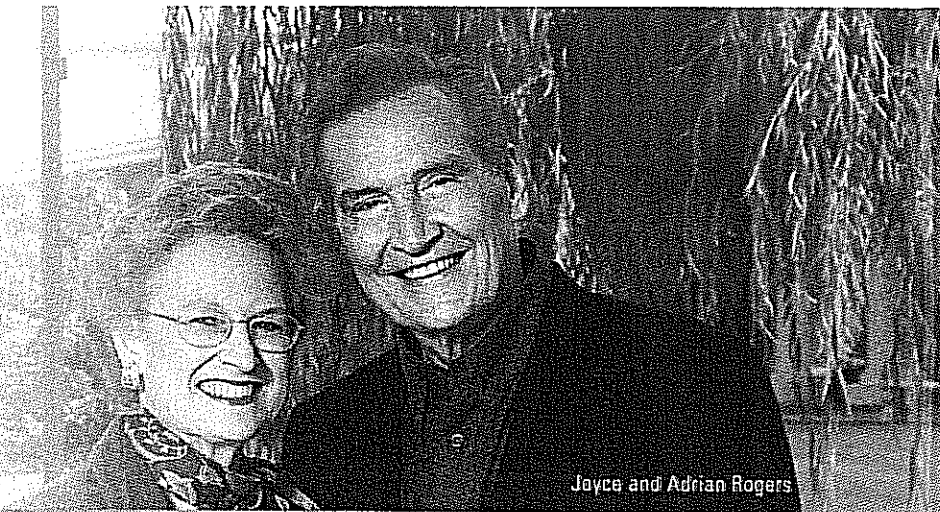




**Mission: Dignity.**  
Assisting Retired Ministers and Spouses

[ A ministry of GuideStone Financial Resources ]



Joyce and Adrian Rogers

## THE MIGHT OF A PRAYERFUL WIDOW



On the morning of November 15, 2005, Adrian Rogers, a long-time leader and servant in the Southern Baptist community, went home to be with the Lord. That evening, Joyce, his wife of 54 years, went home to cry out to the Lord.

*"I remember that first night going to bed alone,"* recalls Joyce Rogers, looking back on the first

hours and days she spent as a widow. *"All I had for the Lord were two words,"* remembers Joyce. *"Help me,"* she uttered through her fog of grief and the life-rattling realization that the man she fell in love with in grade school and married in college would never again lay down beside her.

*"While my husband wasn't there, I knew the Lord was there and I clung to His promise to never leave or forsake me,"* says Joyce, who now realizes that as she was tearfully whispering those first prayers for help to the Lord, He was calling her into a relationship with Him that would go deeper than anything she had experienced as the wife of one of the world's most influential pastors. *"When I no longer had a husband to go to, I had a greater need to go deeper with the Lord. And through prayer, I have felt His presence, peace, power and provision."* Joyce adds that the promises God spoke through the prophet Isaiah to His chosen people have been like a balm for her own hurting heart.

**"do not fear...** You will not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more.

For your Maker is your husband, The Lord of hosts is His name;

And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel;

He is called the God of the whole earth."<sup>1</sup> (Isaiah 54:4-5)

Joyce's favorite Old Testament name for God is Jehovah-Shamma – "The LORD is there." After her husband passed away, Joyce's family designed and created a Jehovah-Shamma sign to hang above her bed. It serves as a daily reminder that though her beloved Adrian is no longer there she can rest well knowing that her Savior is ever present.

Throughout His Word, God is clear that widows hold a special place in His heart. Woven into His very character is a love for widows:

**"for the Lord your god** is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow..." (Deut. 10:17-18)

And He expects His love for widows to be woven into the character of His people:

**"pure and undefiled religion** before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."<sup>2</sup> (James 1:27)

Even the secular world recognizes the need to come alongside widows. The United Nations has deemed Saturday, June 23, 2012 as "International Widows Day," in an effort to draw attention to the plight of widows worldwide. For many women, the loss of a husband leads to loss of status, income security, livelihood, a home, and personal safety and security. Some might argue that is not a significant problem in the U.S., and more specifically, in the Church. However, the reality is that, even in America, thousands of widows who served in ministry with their husbands for decades find themselves at a loss for income and ministry purpose at the end of their lives. GuideStone, which exists to honor God by serving as lifelong partners to those serving the Lord, seeks to protect widows from such despair.

First, GuideStone provides retirement planning and services for ministers and employees serving Southern Baptist and other evangelical churches and ministry organizations. "You don't think about it when you're younger, but the churches must think about it," says Joyce Rogers who recognizes what a blessing it is to have the financial security she has. "To have a whole life in ministry, and then at the end of your life to have nothing... what grief that must add to these widows."

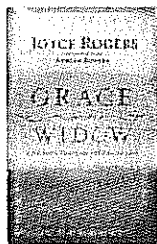
Second, GuideStone's Mission:Dignity program provides assistance to retired SBC pastors and their wives or widows who are struggling to meet their daily needs including housing, food and vital medications. Of almost 2,000 individuals served by Mission:Dignity, almost 60% are widows, and one of every four recipients is a pastor's widow age 85 or older. In fact, eight are over 100 years old — the oldest being 104. The plight of widows is heart-wrenching, with nearly half of widows in the world living in poverty.

Finally, GuideStone's Widows' Might ministry engages widows in a purposeful prayer ministry. "The sad reality for many wives of pastors is that, when their husbands die, they feel like they no longer have purpose or ministry," says Susie Hawkins, wife of GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins, and founder of the Widows' Might ministry at GuideStone.

"As long as I am on this earth, He still has purpose for me. And I am confident that He has purpose for all widows in the church," declares Joyce Rogers, encouraging all widows (and widowers) to join the Widows' Might effort and to remain engaged in the powerful ministry of prayer.

For more information about Widows' Might, visit [www.GuideStone.org](http://www.GuideStone.org).

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** At age 79, Joyce Rogers continues to passionately serve in Christian ministry through speaking and writing. Having authored numerous books, including *Grace for the Widow: A Journey through the Fog of Loss* (B & H, 2009), Joyce Rogers is currently working on a publication for pastors' wives. She continues to live in Memphis, Tennessee, where she and her husband, Adrian, made their home and raised their children. She is the grandmother of nine children and great-grandmother to six. For more information about Joyce Rogers and her ministry, visit <http://www.HeyJoyceWithJoyceRogers.com>



### We asked

#### Joyce Rogers

to offer practical ways for a church to minister to widows in its congregation. Below are her suggestions.

1. Know who the widows are in your church — not just by face, but by name and story.
2. Remember widows on especially difficult holidays like birthdays and Valentine's Day.
3. Make a personal call to widows when inviting them to an event at the church, and offer to pick them up. Personal contact means so much more than a mailed invitation.
4. Offer a valet service at the church for widows who need extra help during bad weather.
5. Assign a different deacon and wife to each widow to fellowship with her and identify practical needs that she has that she cannot meet on her own.
6. Pray with widows in person and over the phone.
7. Have an annual widows' luncheon with a special speaker to address the unique needs of the widow.
8. Offer a new widows' seminar that addresses the immediate needs/demands that newly widowed women face.
9. Offer a compassion packet to new widows with practical and Scriptural helps.
10. Work with the widows in your church to develop a "buddy system" in which those who have been widowed for some time can assist and mentor others through this difficult season.