

1 Timothy 5:1-16 - The Family Dynamics of God's Church

When it comes to church, people have a lot of ideas of how the Church should address people's needs and how they should act towards others. As a young Pastor Timothy needed to figure out how to treat and deal with each group in the church, especially if he had to correct them at times.

But also, this is important so that we don't neglect any group in the church! Timothy might have been tempted to gravitate towards the younger men who he could more easily associate with. The exhortation is both how to associate and minister to every group in the church. For a young minister, but really for anyone, this is practical advice on how to navigate through the different groups present in the church.

1. How To Treat The Men & Women v1-2

1. **1 Timothy 5:1-2 NKJV - Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity."**
2. The older men as fathers. - He was not to lash out or be authoritative with older men, but to be respectful when correction was needed. He was to be strong and with conviction, but not arrogant and haughty. The word used means to not rebuke harshly, but to invite and implore them like you would a father. The idea is of a coach encouraging the athletes to do their best and do what must have to be done to arrive there.
3. The younger men as brothers. - The idea here is to encourage them as friends and partners in the Gospel. The way you encourage your sibling to persevere and push ahead is how Timothy should treat the younger men.
4. The older women as mothers. - To the older women he was to speak respectfully and even allow them to be a bit motherly. To encourage them how he would encourage his own mom.
5. The younger women as sisters. - He was to treat the younger woman with respect and purity. Not provocative or flirtatious (think play boy) in his conduct towards them. He was to treat them as if they were his sisters.
6. These are good principles for all of us. Regardless if you're a pastor or not. Treating each group within the church with respect, while encouraging to press deeper into their relationship with God, is a good and honorable thing and will only benefit us. If we all encouraged each other to press on, we'd support each other to go deeper into what the Lord has for each of us and grow as believers, and be a healthier church all around.

2. How To Treat The Needy v3-16

1. **1 Timothy 5:3-16 NKJV - "Honor widows who are really widows. 4 But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to**

show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. 5 Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. 7 And these things command, that they may be blameless. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 9 Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, 10 well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. 11 But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, 12 having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. 13 And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. 14 Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15 For some have already turned aside after Satan. 16 If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows."

2. Another group Paul brings up in God's family is the needy, specifically the widows.
3. Paul knew there would always be needs within the church. But the reality is the Church has limited funds between various costs. The bigger and more organized the church, the more costs get associated with it.
4. Not just that, Paul also knew that Timothy, and pastors in general, can get so caught up in trying to meet people's needs, they can neglect prayer, Bible study and discipleship.
5. So what was the solution? He places qualifications. He shows not everyone should be helped. And that might shock or be difficult for some people to hear. But the church is neither called or required to help everyone. Nor can it. Resources are limited, and we have to be good stewards of what God has given us.
6. And one of the most vulnerable groups of people in the church are widows, women who lost their husbands. And in the early church, losing their husbands often meant total poverty and need. But there were factors that decided if a widow should be helped by the church. This shows that it is good to have benevolence requirements. Because everyone has needs, but there are people who have nothing, and can't care for themselves, but

others absolutely can do something, or have people that can look out for them before they turn to the church.

7. **“Honor widows who are really widows.”** He makes clear we should people who are truly in need. So then the question is how do we know they are in need?
8. **“But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God”.** First thing off the bat, if she has a family that can care for her, they are responsible for her! It is our job to care for our parents and families. We can't expect the church to carry the responsibility we have been given.
 1. Even legally in our country, there are consequences if you don't care for your elderly parents. It is the responsibility of the family to care for their elderly. If the elderly person has someone that can care for them, then the church should not take that responsibility. It's not that we can never assist at times, but the regular financial support should not be given if there are others who should be doing so.
 2. **5:8 - “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”**
 3. The church should not relieve a family of their obligations to their own. If they neglect it Paul declares that they are worse than an unbeliever, because even they know they should care for their own.
 4. So a true widow is one who has no one to support her.
9. **“Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. 7 And these things command, that they may be blameless.”** Now another qualification is to look at their character! If she is a godly person who prays and serves and follows the Lord, she should be helped. But if she is an ungodly person who lives in sin and is using the financial support to continue in this lifestyle, the church should not give a penny.
 1. Look at our own culture. Some people really do need welfare. But others abuse the system. And those that abuse the system sometimes deprive those who truly need it.
 2. You tell me, have you seen places on welfare with nice shoes and phones and TV's and you're over here working and sweating to make ends meet?
 3. So they have to be people with godly character who aren't mooching off the system.
10. **“Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, 10 well reported for**

good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work." What is he listing? Works that reveal godly character. A godly mother and wife, who showed service and hospitality and has a reputation of godly living. It is the emphasis on helping people who show that they are of the Lord.

1. **Galatians 6:10 - "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."**
2. When choosing who to help, a church should focus first on believers over unbelievers, believers in their church before believers out of their church, and faithful church members before members who aren't. This blows people's mind sometimes to realize God actually says to do it this way. And if they have the gift of mercy, forget about it! It breaks them. But this is part of realizing it is God's church. We should pray even about who we should help!
11. But notice he says they should be 60 or older, he continues this reason now in verse 11, **"But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, 12 having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. 13 And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. 14 Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15 For some have already turned aside after Satan."**
12. Paul is speaking from experience. He saw what happens when you support people who are able to remarry, work, or have someone to care for them. They end up with too much free time and then become trouble!
13. The saying goes "idle hands are the devils playground. And in Thessalonians he says if you don't work, you shouldn't eat, and spoke of how we should work and labor because it is good for us. So if they were of an age they could remarry, he told them to do so, because they would desire marriage later on.
14. You also see, unfortunately, in our culture of welfare, that many young women end up with many kids from different fathers. By absolving the men of the responsibility to provide and her the need to work and give her too much free time, Paul experienced that it didn't end well.
15. So the exhortation throughout scripture to give people assistance is if they truly need it, if they are incapable or providing for themselves or do not have family to help, and that they be godly people.

16. You can go into other verses, but the application in this section is you have to seek the Lord on if you should help people. Your help might actually enable people to do wrong. Like when you give an addict money. So we need to be wise about the limited finances we have, and truly seek the Lord personally on who and how we should help people.
17. **“If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”**
18. And he finishes with the reminder that we are responsible for caring for our family. It might not be fun, it might be hard and sometimes even frustrate us, but it is honoring to the Lord to do so.
19. Remember, the church is God’s family, and we need to address each person in a way that honors the Lord and reveals who we are to the world!

Discussion Questions:

1. How should we treat different generations within the church?

Paul tells Timothy to treat older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters. What can we learn from this about respect, encouragement, and purity in the way we relate to different people in the church?

2. Why is it important for the church to care for people in need wisely?

We spoke about how the church has limited resources and that Paul gives specific qualifications for who should receive ongoing assistance. Why do you think good stewardship and discernment are important when caring for people who are in need?

3. What responsibility does a family have toward its own?

The verses emphasize that if a widow has children or grandchildren who can care for her, the family should take that responsibility rather than placing it on the church. What does this passage teach us about the importance of caring for our own families?

4. Why does character matter when determining who should receive ongoing help?

Paul considers not only a person's need but also their character, faith, prayer life, service, hospitality, and reputation for good works. Why do you think these qualities were included in determining who the church should support?

5. How can helping someone actually hurt them?

We talked about how assistance can sometimes enable someone to continue doing wrong rather than helping them. Can you think of situations where helping someone without wisdom could actually make their situation worse? What does the sermon say we should do before deciding how to help?