

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 28TH, 2019 // 1 TIMOTHY

1 Timothy 5 has specific instructions about how we relate to each other within the church and how we steward our resources of finances & influence.

FAMILY MATTERS (1 TIM. 5:1-2)

Throughout the Bible, various metaphors are used to describe the church and to emphasize certain qualities ("the body", "the household of God", the "bride of Christ").

- In these verses, Paul describes the relationship between a pastor and the members of his congregation in terms of a family.
- As a family, we're to interact with one another with love, honor, and respect.

People are sensitive to their own weaknesses, and very few of us enjoy when attention is drawn to our failures or character flaws.

- We need others in our family to hold us accountable for our actions and behavior.
- Every family and household that is truly harmonious and healthy has accountability- no accountability or honesty produces superficial unity and unspoken tensions.

So accountability within the church is important and needed, however, the approach matters.

- Timothy (and all pastors) is told encourage & exhort older men as fathers- not to rebuke them.
- Correction & accountability is important, but when it's done in a disrespectful, judgmental, or heartless way, a rebuke can cause more harm than good.

In the same way, Timothy is told to exercise his pastoral authority with gentleness and respect when dealing with older women- he's to treat them "as mothers" (vs. 2).

- He's to treat the younger men in the church who are closer to his age not as underlings or inferiors, but as his "brothers".
- There should be no condescending or authoritarian harshness in church authority.

Then he tells Timothy to treat the younger women in the church as "sisters...with all purity"

- This is an additional clause that reminds Timothy, all pastors, and all believers to live above reproach and any suspicion in our interactions with the opposite sex.
- Paul had many female friends, but his warning to Timothy is that we need to be exceptionally careful to not compromise the name of Christ.

"As brothers...as sisters...in all purity." (vs. 2)

- As believers in our relationships with the opposite sex, we need to be careful and cautious.
- Not being careful with things like physical touch, online or electronic communication, or alone time with the opposite sex is a recipe for trouble.
- There are just some topics of conversation that don't need to happen between men and women who are not married.

MINISTRY TO WIDOWS (1 TIM. 5:3-16)

We need to consider the historical context of 1 Timothy as read this passage- there are big differences between 1st century Ephesus and 21st century America.

- We live in an affluent culture where we have things like disability & life insurance, 401(k)s, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities for the care of the elderly.
- These things didn't exist in Ephesus.

When an elderly woman's husband passed away, culturally, her family was expected to take her in and provide for her needs.

- But that didn't always happen and some elderly widows were left completely alone.
- So one of the main ministries of the early church was providing for the needs of widows.
- The church is always called to minister to the needs of those who are destitute and helpless.

The church is always to make ministering to the hopeless and helpless a top priority- whether it's widows & orphans, the homeless, the unborn, or those in addiction/recovery.

- However, the church is responsible to be a good steward of its resources, so the church is instructed to put qualifications on benevolence.
- The truth is, there are people who exploit good programs, and there is a difference between helping and enabling.

Apparently, many people were taking advantage of this benevolence program in Ephesus.

- So Paul wants to make sure that these resources are going to those who are "truly widows"- those who genuinely can't care for themselves. First, Paul insists in verses 9 & 10 that widows enrolled on the church's support list must be above a certain age.

They also must have shown by a lifetime of family and community service that they were truly believers and active members of the church (vs. 10).

- Secondly, those who could be supported by other means should make that their first priority.
- A widow's relatives should be the first ones to support her (vs. 4-5), and if she's young enough to remarry, she doesn't need to enroll (vs. 11).

If a younger widow that's able to remarry or even able to work gets enrolled in a "social welfare" program she doesn't really need, she'll get bored, purposeless, and become an "idler", "busybody", and "gossip" (vs. 13).

- God intends for us (if we are able) to work and contribute to society- choosing not to when we're capable of working is a sin and direct path to misery, depression, and more sin.

Lastly, Paul insists again that Christians must care for their own family members (vs. 16)

- Someone who doesn't have "denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (vs. 8).

There are two modern applications of this principle:

1. We are to do what we can to care for our aging and elderly family members.
2. We are to work to provide for those in our immediate household (spouses & children).

CONCERNING ELDERS (1 TIM. 5:17-25)

In this letter, Paul was not just speaking on how to care for the congregation, he also speaks on how to care for its leaders.

- Elders who teach & preach (or pastors) are just people.
- Like all people, they need things like fair wages, protection from unfair criticism, and an understanding community that will honor and respect them and the work they do.
- Discouraged, tired, constantly criticized, and underpaid pastors usually don't lead well.

1. Honor "faithful elders" with generous provision.

- Those who labor in preaching and teaching and "rule well" should be considered worthy of "double honor" (vs. 17). But what does "double" mean? Double honor means two-fold honor- through 1) fair pay and through the 2) respect from the congregation.
- To give biblical credence to Paul's claim, he cites two scriptural precedents.

The first comes from the law: "do not muzzle an ox" (Deut. 25:4), the 2nd from Jesus's teaching: "the worker deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7).

- This doesn't mean a pastor can't be bi-vocational (Paul did this from time to time), it just means that if a church is able to compensate their pastor they should seek to do so.
- Failing to do so may reveal a deeper problem of disrespect for the work a pastor does.

2. Protect all elders from unfounded accusations.

- Leaders will get shot at- when someone leads publicly they'll ALWAYS be the target of unfair criticism, gossip, or even unfounded accusations.
- No accusation against a pastor or elder should be considered unless it is brought by two or three witnesses (vs. 19). Gossip isn't the same thing as godly concern.

3. Rebuke unrepentant elders publicly.

- When there may be occasions when a church leader is found guilty of sin, Paul instructs the church to "rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear" (vs. 20).
- This is for serious, unrepentant sin- and it's purpose is to create a seriousness and sober attitude about sin within the church.
- This is to be kept without "partiality" (vs. 21).

4. Be careful and intentional in appointing an elder.

- Timothy is warned to "not be hasty in the laying on of hands" (vs. 22) to appoint someone as a leader in the church. Why? Because some sins only "appear later" (vs. 24).
- Anyone can appear to be mature, godly, and qualified- but only time can tell.
- In the same way, "good works are conspicuous"- time will reveal someone's godly character.

"Drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach..." (vs. 23)

- Sandwiched between a warning to "keep yourself pure" and to be careful in appointing potential elders is this random admonition Paul gives to Timothy to drink wine.
- Most likely, in order to clarify his directive for Timothy to keep himself pure, Paul put in this exception clause.
- Paul does want Timothy to be pure, but a legalist- a "little wine" was beneficial to his health.
- We all have the ability (or the power) to either be a blessing or a burden to other people.
- We've all been given 3 things from God to manage that can either be used to help or to harm-

1. relationships, 2. finances, 3. influence.