

Lesson Five

WORKING WITH OTHERS

I Timothy 5:1-25

RESPECT OTHERS

SECTION I 5:1, 2

5 Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, 2 older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.

This fifth chapter is often neglected as it seems to deal with problems unrelated to our experience, the care of widows by the church. However, Paul provides principles dealing with people in need and with people who lead. Methods change, but basic principles do not.

Vs. 1, 2 Younger men often lose patience with older men who are more cautious than they or who have fallen into set patterns of action. Especially in our country, too many wonder, "Is there really life after thirty?" When our elders (the context shows this to be old men, not presbyters) need correction, let us do it with the spirit Paul taught in 4:12. A respectful son would never "smite with words" (literal meaning of "rebuke" here) his father. And who would call his mother a "meddling, old biddy"? To change the behavior of others we must use tact (cf. Acts 18:26) and loving concern (I Cor. 13).

We are tempted to "boss" those of our own age or younger than we. That always produces friction. Love and guide him as you would your kid brother for he is your Father's son.

A young man must guard his relationships with younger women (II, 2:22). Treat them with the respect due a flower of God. The Arabs call a man of extreme chivalry, "a brother to girls." Unguarded Christian love can degenerate into un-Christan lust.

To the old, show affection and respect. To our peers, show brotherly kindness. To those of the opposite sex, show purity.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. From a practical standpoint, how do we correct those who are older? What of our own parents?
2. "Love is blind." Does that mean we should ignore faults in those we love?
3. In what ways is jealous competition manifested among those of similar age?

REVERE WIDOWS

SECTION II 5:3-16

3 Honor widows who are real widows. 4 If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. 5 She who is a real widow, and is left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day; 6 whereas she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. 7 Command this, so that they may be without reproach. 8 If any one does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

9 Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband; 10 and she must be well attested for her good deeds, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the feet of the saints, relieved the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way. 11 But refuse to enroll younger widows; for when they grow wanton against Christ they desire to marry, 12 and so they incur

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condemnation for having violated their first pledge. 13 Besides that, they learn to be idlers, gadding about from house to house, and not only idlers but gossips and busy-bodies, saying what they should not. 14 So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, rule their households, and give the enemy no occasion to revile us. 15 For some have already strayed after Satan. 16 If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her assist them; let the church not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are real widows.

In this section we chose to depart from our verse by verse explanation and pull together all the concepts concerning widows as expressed in this chapter. "Widow" means "desolate, bereft, empty." Note Paul's play on this word. Some widows are completely desolate ("true," v. 3) while others yet have family (v. 4). Also, consider the five types of widows mentioned: (1) Completely desolate widows with no one but God (3, 5); (2) Widows who have children or grandchildren (4, 8, 16); (3) "Merry widows" who live in sinful pleasure (6); (4) Enrolled widows who serve the church (9, 10); (5) Younger widows who are to remarry (11, 14). Of course a widow might fall into two or three of these categories, but Paul is trying to establish guidelines for every situation that might occur.

The word "honor" has double meaning, referring both to respect and financial support. The first meaning is evident in the word. The second is shown by the context of the whole chapter (4, 8, 16-18), and the use of this same word in Mk. 7:10-13. Every widow would receive respect, but certain restrictions are placed on financial support for some.

If a widow had family or relatives, they should support her as Paul emphasizes by mentioning it three times (4, 8, 16). Each of these verses has a reason behind it: (1) They "owe it" to their parents and it pleases God to see them obey Ex. 20:12; (2) Their witness to a pagan community will be destroyed because even unbelievers support their own; (3) It frees the church to help those who have no one.

"True" widows often were in dire straits as government agencies gave no help (cf. I Kings 17:8-17). They were preyed upon by those who were stronger, even by religious leaders (Mt. 23:14; Ezek. 22:7). God had a special concern for them (Ex. 22:22-24). The first controversy in the infant church was over care of widows (Acts 6:1). A concern for widows and orphans is equated with true godliness (Jas. 1:27). Thus, Paul urges the church to get involved in a concern that has always been a part of godliness.

But Paul does not wish to subsidize sin. Some widows used freedom

from marital ties as an occasion for lewd living. Paul does not wish them to receive the Lord's money for the devil's pleasures (6).

The "enrolled" widow is one of the puzzles of this epistle. The word means "put on a list" (9). Qualifications are listed (9, 10) and a pledge of some sort given (12). Several suggestions are offered. (1) These are the widows the church will support. But dare we suggest the church would not help one who was only fifty-nine? Or childless? And Acts 6:1 suggests no such test was made. (2) These are deaconesses. But why not mention them in chapter three? And why age sixty? And why not name them? (3) These are church-supported women who have pledged themselves in service to the church in a teaching or home-ministry capacity. This suggestion best fits as qualifications usually implies work to be done. Also, Titus 2:3-5 harmonizes well with this view. Thirdly, early church history does mention such a group of women. Older women who had enjoyed successful marriages and had raised children and had served the community well would be the ones to teach the younger women these arts. Younger widows would lack these skills and also would have the natural desire to remarry forgetting the pledge they had made to the church. (Some see this pledge as commitment to Christ with a resultant falling away from the faith.) Younger widows would be more prone to gad about carrying gossip from place to place perhaps using this church-supported freedom to look for a man; when one uses the church, he is in danger of losing his soul. So Paul prefers the younger to remarry and "rule" the house, her normal sphere of service and function. Some see I Cor. 7:8 as a contradiction, but there Paul speaks of those few who have a special gift from God to remain celibate; even in that chapter Paul does not condemn marriage (7:9, 10).

Most of the qualifications in verses 9 and 10 are self-evident. Older women of sixty would be less apt to remarry and would have maturity and knowledge. A "one man woman" (literal) would be one who had lived with but one husband; a multi-married woman would have little example to show to the younger. (Is this a parallel verse to 3:2? If so, does it help in interpreting that requirement?) Washing of feet was a social amenity practiced in that hot country of sandal-wearing people; that it was social and not a church function is shown by the other items in this list. The picture is that of a godly woman who had enjoyed a successful marriage in which she has raised a family and ministered to the needs of her community.

As we summarize the lessons concerning older people taught in this chapter, may we suggest the following principles.

1. Families are to provide for their own (4, 8, 16).
2. The church should help those who cannot help themselves (cf. Acts 6:1).

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3. Immorality is not to be encouraged by our support (6).
4. Respect and concern, as well as money, is needed by older people.
5. The accumulated wisdom of older people should be used by the church to help others.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Does government support relieve the church from her obligation to help needy widows?
2. What needs, other than financial, do older folks have?
3. Do children "owe" their parents something? Do grandchildren?
4. The Bible teaches respect for age. The USA has been accused of worshipping youth. Are we violating Scripture by this attitude?
5. Does putting an elderly parent into a nursing home violate Paul's teaching?
6. *Is it wrong for a widow to remarry? What are some dangers of remarrying? Of remaining single?*
7. Should feet-washing be part of our worship? (cf. Jn. 13:14, 15)

REWARD ELDERS

SECTION III 5:17-25

17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; 18 for the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." 19 Never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 20 As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. 21 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without favor, doing nothing from partiality. 22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor participate in another man's sins; keep yourself pure.

23 No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

24 The sins of some men are conspicuous, pointing to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. 25 So also good deeds are conspicuous; and even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.

V. 17 The subject of supporting the older women provides Paul an opportunity to discuss the support of presbyters. *Double honor* might mean even greater respect and support than that given widows. More likely Paul is emphasizing that elders are to be paid and highly respected too, a double honor. This verse gives us a glimpse at the function of elders. All ruled or made decisions for the church (I Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17). Some of that group gave even more time to teaching which would be time consuming; to be able to give it much time, the church would have to help them with support. In a sense, the preacher who spends much time teaching the church is performing the elders' function and everyone accepts his need for support. How much better to support fully or partly those qualified elders who are good teachers and free the preacher to be an evangelist working with the lost (II, 4:1-5). Elders are teachers (3:2; Tit. 1:9; Eph. 4:11) and much of his "shepherding" will involve teaching (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2, 4).

V. 18 The O.T. forbade putting a muzzle on the ox who pulled the grinding wheel to prevent him from snatching a mouthful of grain (Deut. 25:4). If he helps prepare the food, he has a right to share in it (I Cor. 9:9). Paul also uses N.T. authority for paying church leaders as he refers to the words of Jesus in Luke 10:7. For an expanded treatment of this theme, discover the six or seven arguments Paul uses in I Cor. 9 for a paid leadership.

V. 19 Not only should the elder get pay for services if needed, he certainly should get at least the same respect a criminal gets. The O.T. law (Deut. 19:15), as does our own, demanded two witnesses to convict a man of wrong. Many godly elders are "convicted" at the Sunday dinner table by the malicious words of the gossip. Let us revere our leaders and consider criticism of them carefully.

V. 20 If the charge is founded on truth, then act upon it. The "all" may refer to the entire congregation as in Acts 5:11; it may refer only to the other elders. Since the whole congregation is involved in choosing these men, it seems reasonable that the whole body be involved in disciplining him (cf. I Cor. 5:1-4). Common sense should decide which problems are best solved by a small group and which are to be taken to the whole assembly (Mt. 18:15, 16).

V. 21 Paul uses a strong word, "charge," as he pictures a courtroom "before God, and the Lord Jesus, and the elect angels" to impress the seriousness of partiality. The elect angels are those who do not follow Satan (Jude 6). Partiality has been one of the chief perverters of justice in mankind's history. It is especially odious when it affects our actions in the Lord's work. Rightness and wrongness are not determined by *who* is doing the action, but by how God judges *what* is being done.

V. 22 Laying on of hands sometimes refers to apprehending someone

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for wrong (Acts 4:3; 5:18). It also applies to those being ordained to an office or service (Acts 6:6; 13:3). So Paul is warning Timothy to be cautious in disciplining elders who appear guilty of wrong, or to take care in ordaining to office elders who are unproven (3:8) lest he be a "partner" in the evil they do. Both ideas are in the context and both are true. Perhaps we should apply it both ways.

V. 23 Some would place the last phrase of v. 22, "keep thyself pure," with this verse. Others suggest that as Paul reflects on the temptations Timothy will have as he seeks to practice what has been written, he is reminded of the young man's extreme conscientiousness even to the damage of his health by refusing to use wine for his stomach's distress. Lest we use Paul's statement as an excuse for inbibing, let us note that it was a specific command to a specific person for a specific reason. If your name is Timothy and you have stomach problems, then perhaps you might feel justified in appropriating this verse. Even then, Paul urges only a "little." Most of us practice this in principle as much of our medicines contain alcohol bases. For a fuller discussion of wine, see DeWalt, *Paul's Letters To Timothy and Titus*, p. 301ff.

Vs. 24, 25 Paul returns to the subject of laying hands on elders too quickly. If we could read hearts, we could avoid many headaches. Since we cannot, we must examine lives closely. Gold sometimes proves to be iron pyrite, "fool's gold." And ugly ducklings often grow into majestic swans. Let us be slow to judge knowing that truth will eventually show itself.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Would the work of your congregation be expanded if your elders were enabled to give more time to teaching and the evangelist more time to evangelizing?
2. Is a paid ministry wrong?
3. Are those who listen to gossip as guilty as those who tell it? (5:19)
4. How common is partiality in church affairs? Does it produce factions?
5. What is the purpose of discipline? (5:20; cf. I Cor. 5:1, 5, 7)
6. Why do people drink? Is it wrong for a Christian to use alcohol as a medicine?