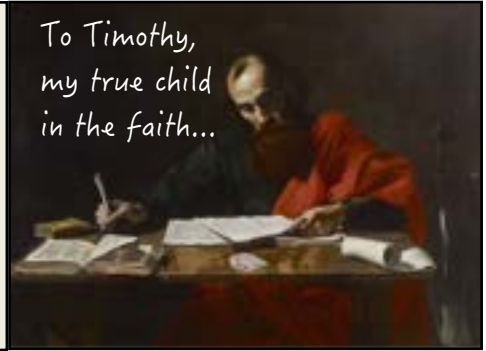


1 Timothy

A Call to Faithful Service

Lesson 9

To Timothy,
my true child
in the faith...



In the latter part of chapter 4, Paul urged Timothy to be faithful in his service as a minister of Christ. He is to rise above silly arguments and continue to develop his spiritual gift and conduct his ministry with consistent effort and dedicated service.

Further Instructions on Church Life (5:1-16)

People within the church differ in gender, age, and needs and Paul instructs Timothy how to minister to these various groups within the church.

Older men are to be encouraged as one would a father indicating a respectful and dignified approach. The word rebuke indicates a harshness which is inappropriate for these older men. Scripture consistently teaches that those who are advanced in years are to be treated with respect. Still, when necessary the older men need to be instructed or corrected, but this should be done in a way that is loving and respectful as one would gently encourage his own father.



Younger men are to be approached as brothers. Brothers are generally close in age and have shared experience so they can be approached with more force and bluntness.



Older women should be treated as one would his own mother with a gentleness, respect, tenderness, and honour that is appropriate for this relationship.



There is special concern with how the minister interacts with younger women. The word “all” is placed before “purity” indicating there must not even be a hint of anything that could be interpreted by anyone as morally inappropriate, but demonstrating the same type of concern a man would have for the welfare of his own sister. More than three quarters of a century ago A.T. Robertson noted, “No sort of behavior will so easily make or mar the young preacher as his conduct with young women.”¹



¹ Robertson, Archibald Thomas. Word Pictures in the New Testament. 6 vols. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931.

To accomplish his ministry with all the members of the church Timothy needed to act with the right mix of wisdom, bluntness, respect, tenderness, restraint, and purity.

1. Describe how the wrong type of approach or actions with each of these categories of people could harm Timothy's ministry.

a. Older men -

b. Older women -

c. Younger men -

d. Younger women -

In verses 3-16 Paul spends a great deal of time discussing how to care for widows in the church as well as instructions for how widows are to conduct themselves. Since so many verses are devoted to this subject we can assume this was a problem for the church in Ephesus.

When Paul writes about widows who are “truly widows” he is describing women who have no other means of support from children or grandchildren. In the world of the first century, without the government social structures common in the western world today, widows could become truly destitute. These widows should be treated with “honour” meaning their needs should be met by the church so that they might live with dignity.



2. What do verses 4 and 8 teach us about the responsibility of children and grandchildren to their mother, grandmother, and immediate family?² How is this a “return” to their parents?

The church was to provide assistance to widows who were 1) left all alone; 2) who hoped on God; and 3) who were women of faith and prayer. On the other hand the widow who “is self-indulgent” is spiritually dead though physically alive and should not be supported. The word translated as “self-indulgent” literally means one who gives herself to wanton pleasure, extravagant, or luxurious living.³ This describes a woman who freed from her marital bond gives herself over to a life of self absorption and pleasure. Paul may have also had in mind another first century problem where widows sometimes resorted to immoral living as a means of support.⁴

Timothy had the responsibility to pass on these teachings so that the church members might know how to handle these matters and thus be “without reproach” or without blame.

² The word translated as “relatives” in 1 Timothy 4:8 means “immediate family.”

³ <http://biblehub.com/greek/4684.htm>

⁴ Guthrie, Daniel. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Series. London: Tyndale Press, 1964.

3. According to verse 8, how serious is the sin of the neglect of family?

4. Why is the neglect of family viewed as so grave a sin?

5. List the requirements to be met if a widow was to be enrolled on the list of church widows according to verse 9.

In Jewish thought old age began at sixty and “for other peoples of the region this was the age for retirement and contemplation.”⁵ Other than age the requirements for enrollment on the widow’s list show these women to be Christians of the highest faith and character. The word “enrolled” tells us that these widows were placed or registered on some sort of official list as recognised servants within the church.



Widows younger than sixty could not be placed on the list of recognised church servants. They might receive financial or other help from the church if they had no family, but could not be enrolled on this official list because they were likely to remarry.

While there is nothing wrong with remarrying it shows why these younger widows might not be suited to a long term position of service in the church. Promising to serve Christ and the church for the remainder of their lives and then abandoning that pledge would bring condemnation.

6. What additional temptations do young widows face according to verse 13?

7. What is Paul’s advice to young widows in verse 14?

Paul’s advice and instruction was necessary because some had already strayed after Satan. This probably refers to sexual misconduct, but could also include the idleness and gossip addressed in verse 13. It is easy to imagine the adversary attempting to discredit the church by pointing to any moral failures amongst these women.



Any Christian who has a family member who is a widow is expected to take care of her needs so that they do not become a burden to the church. This allows the church to use its time and resources to help those who have not family members and are truly in need.

⁵ Smith, James E. *Exhortation Epistles*. Lulu, 2011, p. 107.

Practical Application

1. Ministry involves interacting with people. The wise servant of Christ must learn how to approach men and women in all stages of life. This requires wisdom and understanding.
2. God is always concerned about the most vulnerable in society and widows without family members were in a precarious position in the first century. It is equally important that the 21st century church cares for church members in need; especially those who have no family support.
3. Christians are responsible to care for the members of their own family and failure to do so is a serious offense according to Scripture. In today's world time spent with an aged relative engaging in conversation and demonstrating love may be just as important as meeting their physical needs.
4. The church should use the wisdom and resourcefulness of all people including Christian widows to strengthen the church.