

1st Timothy, Chapter 5

Who to Honor

Honor: To hold in high respect. (Dictionary.com)

5:1&2 *Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.*

1. :1&2 When the time comes, in Timothy's years as a Pastor, to approach an older man in his church with a problem that must be addressed, how is Timothy to approach this job?

An older man should be exhorted (confronted) as a father. How would you confront your father? Not with disrespect, that's for sure. A father is someone who has made great and painful sacrifices for you – someone who possibly has given up his own dreams at some time in his life, so that you can have yours. He's a person who has been forced to grow and stretch and often agonize inside as he tries to be the person you need him to be. That man, then, is someone you deeply respect. You may not agree with everything he does, or everything he thinks, but you would be well-advised to never cross the line into purposely hurting or disrespecting him.

So, Timothy....think of your father when you approach any older man in your congregation with words of exhortation or rebuke.

- How about a younger man? - these men treat like brothers. Not as strangers whom you will never see again, but as brothers who share your life until you die.
- And older women? - Treat them as you would your mother. Be tender. Be protective. Shield them from hurt. Help them through life when they need it....give them space when they don't.
- Younger women? - As if they were your sisters. Guard them. Don't let them be hurt. Keep an eye out for predators and chase them away from her. And above all – don't be a predator yourself.

2. Why do you think Paul is advising these different attitudes of approach?

Timothy has a job to do. He will be best able to convey spiritual truths to the people in his congregation if he treats each person as an honored and special creation of God. Will everyone react well to Timothy's Pastoring? No. Some will not want to be confronted no matter how respectfully Timothy treats them. But Paul's advice will open the most doors for ministry possible.

5:3-8 Honor widows who are really widows. ⁴But 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.⁵Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. ⁶But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. ⁷And these things command, that they may be blameless. ⁸But 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. :3-8 What do you think Paul means by "really" widows? Does he think some widows might be pretending to be widows?

By "widows" Paul is not just referring to those women whose husbands have died. It appears Paul is giving guidelines for a special group of widows – those who must be cared for by the church because they are beyond being able to care for themselves.

He is singling out 2 groups of "widows" in verses 3-8:

- 1- Widows who still have family who can care for them should not be included in this group who must have the church care for them. They are not "really widows". They've done nothing wrong – that's not the point. They simply don't need the church to support them financially because they still have family who must take on the responsibility.
- 2- Widows who say they are believers in Jesus, but don't live like it. They are taking advantage of the "social security" system of the church – getting financial support from the church – but not walking with Jesus and not living like Christians. These widows can't be included in this group, either. They are just using the church.

4. :3 What does Paul mean by “honor”? Does this mean people should treat widows with respect? Or does it mean more?

The word “honor” here does not just mean respect – as we can see from the rest of the context of these verses. It also means “financially and otherwise taking care of them”.

5:9&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, ¹⁰well 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”

5. :9&10 Why such stringent requirements for “taking them into the number”? What is this talking about?

Again, I think “taking them into the number” refers to making them a part of the ministry of the church, financially and otherwise. The stringent requirements? This financial care of widows is for those who will be not only taken care of, but also will be ministering to others with the time they now have on their hands. They need to be qualified to do this.

In fact, the qualifications almost seem to mirror the exacting qualifications given earlier, in chapter 3, for Pastors and Deacons. What does that tell us? It tells us that ministering for Jesus Christ is not something to be taken lightly. It is a privilege and responsibility. These widows were not put into this group because everyone felt sorry for them. They were financially supported because they had a need and because they had a job to do still!

5:11-15 But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, ¹²having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. ¹³And 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. ¹⁴Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. ¹⁵For some have already turned aside after Satan.

6. :11-15 If a widow is completely taken care of by her church, is that always a good thing?

No, not necessarily. A younger widow should be encouraged to marry, to take care of her children, to work hard. She should not be supported and taken care to the extent that she has idle time on her hands. And, again, widows with extended family should be helped out by that extended family.

What is this telling us for our current culture? Very simply, I think we can take some very good advice away from this: Help those who need help – so that they can get to the place where they are again helping themselves. When helping is enabling, then it is no longer helping.

5:16 If any believing man or ^{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.

7. :16 Who is the first responsible party for a widow or someone in need?

Family. This applies across the board to all who are in need. If your mother or sister or cousin is in need, don't take them to the community Food Bank – take them to the grocery store and buy what they need yourself. It's your responsibility.

5:17-19 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," ¹⁹and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

8. :17-19 What advice does Paul give Timothy about the treatment of elders in a church?

- a. Pay them well. Double honor.
- b. Don't listen to accusations unless they are confirmed by 2 or 3 others.

This is not just treating elders (Pastors) with respect. It is guarding them and caring for them and looking out for their needs.

5:20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

9. :20 Do you think verse 20 refers to elders who are sinning, or to anyone who is sinning?

I'm not totally sure on this one. The context before the verse would indicate it is talking about elders who are sinning. But the context after the verse might make us think Paul is including this advice with the scattered pieces of advice in verses 21-25.

But here's my best guess: I think Paul is saying that if it is found that an elder, or Pastor, is outright sinning, and is basically "caught", then that man must be rebuked publicly. Why? Why not cover it over and keep things peaceful? Because his sin has undoubtedly affected many people, and the best way to heal the wounds for everyone is to speak the truth – not in anger or in meanness – but in love.

5:21-25 I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. ²²Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

²³ No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

²⁴ Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. ²⁵ Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

10. :21-25 What are the few closing pieces of advice in this chapter?

1. Follow my advice, Timothy, without being partial to one person or one group of persons. Treat everyone the same.
2. Don't be hasty in your confrontations.

3. Don't be so aware of other people's sins, and spend so much time thinking about their sins, that you become a partaker of those sins yourself.
4. Keep yourself sexually pure. Put a guard on your thoughts and what you say and do.
5. Drink a little wine because of the stomach problems you have been having.
6. Use caution when you trust people. Some people hide their true selves very well.
7. Those who do good things are easy to spot. Those who do evil things will someday come to light....just keep your eyes open.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. When someone becomes a widow today, what is the church's responsibility to her?
2. If an elder is counted worthy of double honor, what does that mean a church should do about paying their Pastor?
3. If Paul advised Timothy to drink wine, then does that mean it is OK to drink wine?
4. In this chapter, 2 different types of people are singled out as worthy of honor. Who are they?
 - a.
 - b.
5. If you were to give yourself a grade (F being failing, A being succeeding), for the honor you show to each of these 2 types of people, what would your grades be?
 - a.
 - b.
6. I think you might notice who Paul does not mention in this "to honor" list. Who might we honor today...but Paul doesn't mention them?

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Questions you can use for Discussion
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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.