

Studies in 1 Timothy-05 1 Timothy-5

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of caring for widows and other members of the Christian family, and warns against the dangers of younger widows who may desire to marry and cast off their first faith.

Duration: 38:37

Scripture: Deuteronomy 25:4, Luke 10:7, 1 Timothy 5:23 - 2 Timothy 1:4

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Christian Community"

Description

The sermon transcript discusses various instructions given by Paul to Timothy on how to behave towards different classes in the Christian family. It begins by addressing the old and young, male and female, emphasizing the importance of showing honor and respect. The transcript then moves on to discussing the care and support of widows, highlighting the responsibility of the church in providing for them. It also touches on the role of elders in the church, emphasizing the need for financial care, caution in appointing men, and the importance of having multiple witnesses in cases of accusation. Overall, the transcript emphasizes the practical advice given by Paul to Timothy for the care of believers in the Christian assembly.

Transcript

So shall we turn to that? We'll read the chapter. First, Timothy, chapter five, beginning at verse one. Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren, the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters with all purity.

Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home and to requite their parents, for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed and desolate trusteth in God and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.

Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man. Well reported of for good works, if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saint's feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse, for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry,

having damnation because they have cast off their first faith.

And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but tappers also and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan.

If any man or woman that believeth hath widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged that it may relieve them that are widows indeed. Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and the laborer is worthy of his reward.

Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all that others also may fear. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins. Keep thyself pure. Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities.

Some men's sins are opened beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid." And we really should read the first two verses of the next chapter because they really belong in the same section. Chapter 6, verses 1 and 2. Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

They that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit these things teach and exhort. Now this section, as you've probably observed, gives instruction to a young servant of the Lord as how to behave toward various classes in the Christian family. You'll notice it starts off with older and younger, male and female, widows, elders, and then servants.

Various classes in the Christian family. First of all, in verses 1 and 2 you have the old and the young, male and female. Then in verses 3 through 16 you have a section on the care and support of widows.

In verses 17 through 25 you have a section concerning elders in the church, their financial care, rules regarding discipline, and the need of caution in appraising men for this work. Finally, in chapters 6 verses 1 and 2 you have the duty of servants to their masters, and special instructions for those slaves who have Christian masters. So Paul, as an older Christian, is writing to Timothy, a younger man, telling him how to behave in the family of God.

And these are various groups or classes in the family of God. First of all he says, Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father. The word elder is used in two different ways.

In this chapter it's used for people who are older, older men, and it's also used as elders, those who occupy the position of elders in the local church. Here in verse 1 it simply means an older person. It says that young men, young Christian men, should not rebuke older Christians.

Young people tend to be very zealous, very full of fire, and they can become very intolerant of older people. Sometimes they think older people are stuck in the mud, and other categories like that. And there

is a tendency for young people like Timothy maybe to run off the moat, to become impatient, to say things that they shouldn't say to an older person.

So that is the reason for this first exhortation, Rebuke not an elder, but exhort him really as a father. In other words, if you have something, if you're a younger person and you have something to say to an older person, rehearse it before you say it. Don't let it come off the top of your head.

Think carefully how you can say it in a loving way, in a tender way, in a gentle way, and then you'll have less to apologize for later. Then it says the younger men as brethren. Treat the younger men as brethren.

You know, I suppose a young fellow like Timothy in the work of the Lord might think of himself as being on a pedestal above other young men perhaps in the assembly. And so here's a caution that the Christian family is an equal brotherhood, and Timothy is not to have a superiority complex or to lord it over others at all, but to treat the younger men as brethren. He's also to treat the older women as mothers with all the respect and love and consideration that should be shown to mothers.

Finally, he's to treat the younger women as sisters, and notice what it says, with all purity. How much scandal, how much heartache, how much harm would be avoided if younger men, younger Christian men, would heed these words of Paul to Timothy. The younger as sisters with all purity.

Not trifling with the affections of young sisters, not showing undue familiarity, fondling and handling, and all the rest. But words of wisdom presented so simply in the word of God. Then there is a section, as we said, from verses 3-16 concerning the care of widows in the assembly.

God's rule is, first of all, that widows should be cared for by their own relatives. The first responsibility is on the family, on the children or on the grandchildren. There are cases where a widow would not have anyone to care for her.

She would not have any living relatives who could assume the responsibility to care for her, and in those cases the church, the local assembly, is responsible. Now in this first verse it says, honor widows that are widows indeed. There's a difference in this chapter between widows and widows indeed.

For instance, a woman who has lost her husband and who is being cared for by her family or is financially independent, she's a widow. But a widow indeed in this section is one who is really cast upon the Lord for the supply of her needs. She has no visible means of support and she is cast upon the Lord, widows indeed.

You have that same expression with regard to disciples. You have disciples and you have disciples indeed. Jesus said, if you continue in my words, then are you my disciples indeed.

There's a difference between being a mere disciple and a disciple indeed. But then Paul says, if any widow have children or nephews, the word nephews, really grandchildren, is really what it means. It could do for nephews, but more accurately grandchildren.

If any widow have children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety at home. What does that mean? Well, by taking care of this widow, they would be showing piety at home, by assuming the responsibilities that God has laid down in the word. Incidentally, when it says, honor thy father and thy mother, thy days may be long upon the earth, honor doesn't just mean showing love and affection, but includes the idea of support too.

Support. And that's what you have here. Let them learn first to show piety at home and to requite their parents.

Well, very few parents are ever really recompensed for all they go through for their children. When you think of the sleepless nights, when you think of the sickness and the loving care and the provision and the meals that are served and the home that is provided, very few parents are really, really, ever adequately thanked and repaid for what they do. But the word of God says that children and grandchildren do have a responsibility in this area, and that is good and acceptable before God.

God is practical. God is interested in practical Christianity. He's interested in Christianity that has shoes on its feet.

Now it says, she that is a widow in deed, and then it goes on to explain what a widow in deed is. She that is a widow in deed and desolate, that means no one to care for her and no means of providing for her own support, trusteth in God, has her hopes set on God, and continueth in supplication and prayer night and day. She's really cast upon the Lord, and she's crying to him for the supply of her need.

That's a widow in deed. But then Paul remembers that there are other kinds, and that is the one who just goes off and lives a life of pleasure, just caring for the things of this world. And Paul says in the next verse that a woman like that is dead while she liveth.

That doesn't mean she's spiritually dead. She could be spiritually alive, but it means she's dead as far as discerning the real meaning of life is concerned. Life is made up of more than that.

Life is made up of more than just catering to the body and living in pleasure. It has more serious issues involved. And this second woman here is missing the real meaning of life.

She's wandering around looking for satisfaction in the things that the world has to offer, and those things can never bring fulfillment to her heart. And so Paul says that Timothy, as a servant of the Lord, should always be mindful of these things and commanding them to others that they may be without reproach in this matter. That means that the outside world or other Christians cannot level a serious charge against them for their failure or neglect in this area.

But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel. This means that any Christians who do not undertake the care of their relatives when they are able to do it, that's a practical denial of the Christian faith, because the Christian faith teaches love for one another, and love includes the idea of practical support. He hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.

An infidel here means an unbeliever. It doesn't mean like an atheist who goes across the country preaching against God, but it means an unbeliever. And what the verse is saying is that even unbelievers do this.

Even unbelievers have enough kindness in their heart to care for their own. How much more should Christians do it? But there's something in this verse that we should notice, and that is this. When he says, if any provide not for his own, he's not here speaking about laying up enormous fortunes for one's relatives.

The context here has to do with the provision of current needs, not possible future contingencies. I don't know anywhere in the word of God where people are told to lay up for their relatives some possible future need. That isn't the thought in this passage.

People use it that way, and poor Christian parents oftentimes scrimp and save in order to leave a nest egg to their children. Well, that's not what this passage is speaking of. In fact, the Bible never teaches us to do that.

It teaches us not to lay up treasures on earth, to lay up treasures in heaven. But here, when it says provide not, it means laying up for the current needs of these widows. They're not too worried about the future needs, they're worrying about where the wonder bread is going to come from today.

Now, in the early days of the church, there was a definite role, there was a definite list of widows who were widows indeed, and it gives instruction concerning how to add a woman to that role. You say, well, does this apply to us today? Well, it would apply to us today, I suppose, if we didn't have Social Security and all the rest. Actually, I think what you have in the Bible is the ideal.

I think Social Security and some of our present schemes and plans rob us of some of the blessing of body life. The whole idea of the New Testament church is living together as a body and caring for one another. Through many of these schemes, we throw off that responsibility to Uncle Sam or some impersonal insurance company.

But anyway, they did have this role, and an assembly should operate in this. These instructions are for us today, just as they were for the people in Paul's day. It says, Let not a woman be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man.

First of all, she must be at least sixty years old to be placed, to be enrolled as a widow indeed, and then being the wife of one man means that her married life must have been without reproach. She must not have had an irregular married life, but she must have been consistent in that area, well reported up for good work. This woman is a woman who has lived a life for God.

She has poured out her life in service to the Lord, and it should be the greatest joy of the assembly to take care of her now. If she have brought up children, it doesn't mean just bringing up children, it means bringing them up well, doesn't it? Bringing them up for the glory of God, bringing them up to be a credit to her and to the local church. There's no particular virtue in just bringing up children, although I've known people who base their hopes of heaven on that, but here the thought is bringing them up well.

If she have lodged strangers, here she was given to hospitality. Her house was open, her heart and her home were open to strangers. If she have washed the saint's feet, washing of feet in the Bible days was one of the duties of a slave in the house.

It was a menial task, and here it might mean that very thing, that this woman was not too proud to stoop to menial tasks in behalf of the people of God, or it may be in a spiritual sense that the word is used here. Wash the saint's feet. Jesus washed the disciples' feet, and then he taught them that they were to do that in a spiritual sense.

How do you wash one another's feet? By sharing with them the word of God. Through the word of God, by cleansing them from the defilement of this wicked world in which we live. So we might take that expression either physically or spiritually, wash the saint's feet, and doubtless she did both.

If she have relieved the afflicted, this means that she was a woman of mercy and compassion. Where there was sickness, she would rush there and try to help. Where there was need, she would be by the side of the people, always bringing a cake or a pie or something to help.

When the woman, when the wife is in the hospital, she takes the meal over to the family at home, relieving the afflicted. It says if she have diligently followed every good work. And so what that is saying is that here's a woman, and her life has been exemplary.

She's been a woman of God. She's been a mother in Israel, and she has really lived for the Lord, and now she's come to the place in life. She has no relatives to support her.

Either she has none or the ones she does have won't support her. And what Paul is saying is counted a great joy in the local assembly to take such a woman on the roll and to minister to her and to provide for her needs. Now he says, but the younger women refuse, and that means do not enroll.

Refuse doesn't mean you reject them, doesn't mean you wave them off, but it means that you do not place them on this roll of widows. And he's speaking about a particular danger that arises with younger widows, and goes on to describe that danger. It says, for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry, and will there means they desire to marry.

What Paul is saying here is that there's a terrible danger for a younger woman when she is widowed. At one time she was very devoted for the Lord. She was going on in her Ephesian love.

She would sing all for Jesus, I surrender, oh how I love Jesus. But then in her widowhood, the pressures on her are very, very strong, and some man comes along who does not love the Lord Jesus. And she forgets her first love, and she marries him.

That's what Paul is speaking about here. It really is one of our greatest tests, the greatest test of our devotedness to Christ, isn't it? It really is. I often feel that one of the greatest tests of our devotedness to Christ comes in the realm of the affections.

And they're strong. Those drives are very, very strong. And that's what happens with this woman.

At one time you'd think she was just hissing hot for the Lord Jesus. But then she becomes lonely, and she becomes depressed and despondent. As I say, this man comes along, and he's no friend of Christ.

But he's company, and she marries him. That's what Paul is saying here. That's what these words mean.

They will marry, that is, they desire to marry. Having damnation, that word damnation is very strong here. It really means having this condemnation, having this judgment that they have cast off their first faith.

It doesn't mean that they have renounced the Christian faith, but it means that when the test came, they really flunked the test. That's really what it means. When the test of devotion to Christ came, they failed, and they failed miserably.

And, of course, they go from one thing to another, and pretty soon they're just wandering around, idle, gossips, busybodies, speaking things they should not. And so Paul says, in view of those considerations, it really is better that the younger widows marry again. Their children rule the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

But, of course, when he says marry here, it means marry in the Lord. It isn't enough just to marry a Christian. A Christian woman can marry a Christian man and yet be out of the will of God, because he has to be the man of the Lord's choosing for her.

And it would be far better not to marry at all than to marry outside the will of God. I will, therefore, I desire, therefore, that the younger women marry, and the word women here probably means widows, because that's the whole context. The younger widows marry, their children guide the house.

That's a strong word. It means rule the house. You say, well, I thought the husband was the head of the house.

Well, the husband is the head of the house, but the husband's gone most of the day. The husband's worked, hopefully, most of the day. And the widow, this married woman now, she's the one that has the responsibility in the home, and there's a very real sense in which she does rule the home under her husband's authority.

Give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. That is, by going in a moment of passion and acting contrary to all the principles of the Christian faith. And Paul says, sad to say that has already happened.

Some have already turned aside after Satan. And it says in verse 16, and you'll be surprised at this, but that word man or is not found in the best manuscript. It really reads, if any woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

This means that there might be a wealthy, influential woman, and she has relatives who are widows and who are cast upon the Lord. She's responsible to care for them. If some of you have a modern version of the Bible, it probably says, if any woman, doesn't New American Standard? It probably looks to some woman like Lydia, whom you have in the book of Acts, or whom you've known in life too.

An influential, perhaps wealthy woman, Christian, she is not freed from obligation in the matter. Then verses 17 through 25 generally have to do with the subject of elders in the assembly. These are shepherds in the assembly, guides of the people of God.

And it says, let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. This teaches that first of all, we have a responsibility to love and respect and honor the elders in the local assembly, and we should be praying for them all the time. It could be that some of these elders are devoting their full time to the work.

They're out visiting the sick full time. And they deserve not only respect, but if necessary, the financial support of the assembly. We believe that the word double honor means not only honor because of the work they do, but honor in the sense of financial support wherever it is needed.

You say, why do you say that? Because the next verse brings out that thought. For the scripture said, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and the laborer is worthy of his reward. And muzzling the ox, of course, was forbidden by the law of the Old Testament.

The ox is there treading out the corn. The ox was entitled to eat some of that corn. God legislated about that.

There's something very interesting in this verse. That first quotation is taken from Deuteronomy, chapter 25, verse 4. Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. That's taken from the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy, chapter 25, verse 4. The second quotation, the laborer is worthy of his reward, is taken from Luke, chapter 10, verse 7, from the New Testament. And Paul says, the scripture said. That's a very interesting verse that Paul acknowledges not only the Old Testament to be scripture, but the New Testament as well.

Of course, all of the New Testament wasn't completed when he wrote this, but never mind. He recognized that inspired writings were being prepared, and he speaks of Luke's gospel here as being equally scripture with the book of Deuteronomy written by Moses. It's a very important verse for us today when the inerrancy and infallibility of the scriptures are under attack, even in some evangelical circles.

This is a very important verse. It says, against an elder received not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. This is a very important principle.

Actually, we should follow this verse with any accusation that's made against any person. Somebody showed me a letter the other day in which certain elders were under attack. And they said, what do you think about that? And I handed it back, and I said, I never make a judgment until I hear both sides of the case.

Don't receive an accusation against an elder, but before two or three witnesses. That's a principle in the word of God, that competent testimony, as far as God is concerned, must have two or three witnesses. If somebody comes to you with a yarn about somebody else, it's not enough.

You say, well, don't you believe me? It's not a question whether they believe you. I want to hear what the other fellow has to say, too. It says that in the book of Proverbs.

It says, a man tells you his story, and it sounds very convincing, but his neighbor comes and searches him out. His neighbor comes and tells the other side of the story, and it's quite a different story then, isn't it? So, this applies to elders in a very special way, because I think elders are especially subject to attacks and accusations. But it's a principle that you and I can apply in all of life.

Be careful that you get the testimony of two or three witnesses before you make a judgment, and you'll save yourself from oceans of trouble. Them that sin, rebuke before all that others also may fear. Here's another principle, and I think this refers especially to elders.

But, once again, there's value in it for all the people of God. Them that sin, rebuke before all that others also may fear. In other words, here's a sin that involves the public name of the assembly.

What do you do? Just hush it up? No, I think that disciplinary action must be taken, and others will fear. Then Paul says, I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. There's another interesting thing in this verse, God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels.

Is he putting them all on the same level, the angels, God, the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, you might think so from the English, but in the original language of the New Testament, God and the Lord Jesus Christ are placed together, and the angels are placed separately as far as the grammar of the sentence is concerned. They're not on the same level. So, Paul is telling Timothy to act impartially, fairly, don't play

favorites, and probably in connection with the naming of elders in the local assembly.

It says, lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partakers of other men's sins, keep thyself pure. Lay hands suddenly on no man, that means primarily here in the work of the assembly. Here's a man and he comes into the assembly, wow, he's a big name, and he has a lot of money, and everybody knows he has a lot of money.

Well, let's quickly get him into a position of authority and responsibility so we don't lose him. Paul says don't do that. Lay hands suddenly on no man.

Don't act precipitately in any case like that. Wait. Let time show what kind of a man is he.

Is he a man of God? Is he a man of purity? Is he a man of Christian character? Or is he just a glib talker? Well, you don't get to know a man the first time you meet him, or the first few times either. And so here it says, act slowly, and form wise, godly decisions in this matter. Then Paul, it's funny, this verse 23 about drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and I obviously, why does that come in here? Well, of course we know that Timothy had a nervous stomach, and maybe some of the care of the churches had something to do with it.

And there were a lot of problems involved in the whole work of elders in the assembly, and the care of the local church. Paul said besides that, which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Church making is heart-breaking.

Church mending is heart-rending. And it took its toll on Timothy, and it takes its toll on a lot of people. Besides that, of course, the water supply in those countries was far from pure.

They didn't have chlorine in their water, and it was very easy drinking that water to develop the golly wobbles. And so, Paul tells Timothy here to drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmity. The verse is also significant in connection with the whole subject of divine healing.

Here we have Paul prescribing the use of medicine. He's prescribing the medicinal use of wine. Is it always God's will to heal miraculously? Apparently not.

It wasn't here. I have no doubt that Paul had the gift of healing. I have no doubt he could have healed Timothy of this predisposition to alters, but he didn't do it.

He said, take a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmity. And the Bible shows throughout that it's not always God's will to heal. Paul said, profumous, have I left it my litem sick? Why did he leave him sick? Why didn't he heal him? The paphroditus was sick, nigh unto death for the work of the ministry.

Not for sins he had committed, but because of his zealous service for the Lord. Paul didn't heal the paphroditus. And so on.

We could go down through the New Testament and show case after case of people who were not healed. Paul himself, he had the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of something physical. The thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him.

I believe God can heal miraculously. I believe he can. I believe in divine healing.

I believe all healing is divine. But I believe sometimes it's the will of God to use medicines as well. And you get that balance in this verse.

Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmity. Then he says, some men's sins go beforehand, going to judgment, some men they follow after. Some men sin, and there's an explosion, and a scandal, and everybody knows about it.

Other men sin, and it's hidden for a while, but the sins follow them to a final exposure. Likewise, the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid. This is true.

Some men engage in good works, and you know about it. It just is obvious to all. There are an awful lot of other things that are done for the Lord.

Nobody knows about it at the time, but God is a good record keeper, and he will bring it to the light of day. Now, I think we'll just leave the next two verses in chapter 6 till tonight, Lord willing, although they belong to the section we were on, but our time is gone. So here's Paul's practical advice to Timothy with regard to the care of various classes of believers in the Christian assembly, and they're really just as much for us today as they were for Timothy in the day in which they were pinned.

Shall we look to the Lord in closing prayer? Father, we do thank you for your precious word. We just pray that you'll give us the grace to heed it. Help us not only to believe in the inspiration of the scriptures, but to have a heart to obey them.

We pray that we might not just take a doctrinal stand with regard to the word of God, but a practical stand as well. We think of the care of our loved ones, Lord, and how often we can slough that off today as the Jews did in Jesus' day. But we pray that we might show a practical Christianity to those about us, to the elders, to the younger, to young sisters, to older mothers, to the widows, and that we in our employment as well might ever show forth Christ to our employers and to those with whom we work.

We ask it in the Savior's name and for his sake. Amen.

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