

1 Timothy 5 - Duties of the Church Officers; Widows

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Basic Principles of Interpersonal Relationships

Paul now turns to interpersonal relationships to help Timothy get along with people effectively and instruct others wisely. What Paul wrote in 4:11-13 may have led Timothy to understand Paul to mean that he needed to resort to harsh or overbearing action. Because of this possible misinterpretation, Paul explained that Timothy should not be abusive in prescribing and teaching these things.

One of the greatest failings of pastors is their inability to relate to and work with others effectively. This failure is often traceable to the pastor's attitude toward others—how he views them. In short, Timothy was to relate to everyone in the church as if they were members of his own family.

This chapter deals with generalizations: old men, young women, widows, and slaves. It outlines ways in which these people from different stages of life ought to be treated, and how they ought to treat others. Paul writes as someone who is aware that generalizations must be qualified if they are going to work in practice. The commands he gives concerning these people take into account the particular circumstances of the person's life.

1st Timothy 5

IV. Instructions concerning various groups within the church (1 Tim 5:1—6:21)

(1) Principles for effective interpersonal relationships (5:1-2)

(A) Treat older men as fathers (5:1a)

(B) Treat younger men as brothers (5:1b)

1 Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but *rather* appeal to *him* as a father, *and to* the younger men as brothers,

1 Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but *rather* appeal to *him* as a father, *to* the younger men as brothers,

1 Never speak harshly to an older man, but appeal to him as if he were your father. Treat younger men like brothers,

1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;

- In the first two verses, Paul urged the adoption of proper attitudes toward others, which would make it easier for them to produce proper actions: proper attitudes usually produce proper actions.

- We should deal with older men respectfully and appeal to them gently rather than rebuking them harshly

— Their chronological age, regardless of their spiritual age, is reason enough to approach them humbly rather than arrogantly

- This should include church “elders” as well as older “laymen”
- Even if a situation arises where an older man must be rebuked or even excluded from the fellowship, for example they were teaching false doctrine, they should still be approached patiently
- A church leader can deal with younger men more directly, but should always do so as “brothers”
- The pastor should regard younger men, not as inferior or superior to himself, but as equals

Just as it is difficult for an older person to respect the teaching and leadership of a younger man (4:12), it is also difficult for a younger man to know how to instruct and correct older people in the church.

(C) Treat older women as mothers (5:2a)

(D) Treat younger women as sisters (5:2b)

- 2 to the older women as mothers, *and* to the younger women as sisters, in all purity.
- 2 the older women as mothers, *and* the younger women as sisters, in all purity.
- 2 older women like mothers, and younger women like sisters, with absolute purity.
- 2 The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.
- We should think of and treat the older women in the congregation as we would our own mothers
- This implies giving them special consideration in view of their age and experience
- Younger women should be treated as sisters (in the Lord), and treat them with the purity one would grant his physical sister

(2) Groups enumerated (5:3—6:20)

(A) Widows (5:3-16)

(a) Older widows (5:3-10)

(i) Widows with no family deserve support (5:3-4)

- 3** Honor widows who are actually widows;
- 3** Honor widows who are widows indeed;
- 3** Honor widows who have no other family members to care for them.
- 3** Honor widows that are widows indeed.
- Paul now addressed how Timothy was to deal with two main problem areas in the Ephesian church: the younger widows (v3-16) and the erring elders (v17-25)
- Widows are an especially vulnerable group; as such, God has always shown special concern for their protection (Cf. Deut 10:18; 24:17; Ps 68:5; Is 1:17; Luke 2:37)
- The early church mirrored this attitude (Acts 6:1; 9:39)

- Paul's discussion of widows appears to focus on the younger widows in particular, however the main focus is not money, but the lifestyle of the widow
- These may be the same women Paul spoke of in 2 Tim 3:6-7 who were responding positively to false teachers
- The godly widow, like the godly woman generally, dresses herself in good deeds, hospitality and kindness
- She is to take her sexuality seriously, and remarry if necessary in order to remain pure
- If she does not remarry, has no family support, and lives a life of devotion to the Lord, then the church should give proper recognition to her needs

4 but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to show proper respect for their own family and to give back compensation to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.

4 but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.

4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to respect their own family by repaying their parents, for this is pleasing in God's sight.

4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.

Three Types of Widows

1. Those who have children or grandchildren who could financially support them (v4).
The Christian relatives should care for these widows (Cf. Mark 7:10-12; Eph 6:2).
2. Those who have no one to care for them at all (v3)
3. Widows without children or supporting relatives, who give evidence that they are looking to God for their needs and are seeking to honor Him with their lives.

The Church should honor the second group of widows, the widows with no family to care for them, and presumably widows with non-supportive family members. However, not everyone in the second category should receive financial help from the Church. Only those widows without children or supporting relatives (*memonomeme*, "left alone"), whose lives give evidence that they are looking to God for their needs, and are seeking to honor Him with their lives qualify (3) (Cf. Anna, Luke 2:36-38). These are "widows indeed" (v16).

This serves to restrain the tendency to be mindlessly generous, to give money whenever it is requested, regardless of who is asking for it. Instead of a knee-jerk reaction, which often arises as much out of guilt and embarrassment as compassion, we should think carefully about how to share the resources God has given us.

(ii) Nine qualifications (5:5-10)

(a) Hope in God (5:5a)

(b) Prayerful (5:5b)

5 Now she who is actually a widow and has been left alone has set her hope on God, and she continues in requests and prayers night and day.

5 Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day.

5 A woman who has no other family members to care for her and who is left all alone has placed her hope in God and devotes herself to petitions and prayers night and day.

5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusts in God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.

- Without family support, and within the fellowship (see note above)

(c) Not sinful (5:6-7)

6 But she who **indulges herself** in luxury is dead, *even* while she lives.

6 But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.

6 But the self-indulgent widow is just as good as dead.

6 But she that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.

- "...indulges herself" - *spatalao*, many widows were tempted to resort to immoral living as a means of support; this is probably in the apostle's mind

— Widows who give themselves to the pursuit of "pleasure" rather than the pursuit of God do not qualify for regular support

— These women receive in their lives the wages of their sin: spiritual deadness; the implication is that these women are believers who have gone off the edge morally in order to sustain themselves financially

Godly widows can be a spiritual powerhouse in the Church. They are the backbone of the prayer meetings. They give themselves to visitation, and they swell the ranks of teachers in the Sunday School. However, if a widow is *not* godly, she can be a great problem to the church. She will demand attention, complain about what the younger people do, and often be involved in gossip and division.

7 Give these instructions as well, so that they may be above reproach.

7 Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach.

7 Continue to give these instructions, so that they may be blameless.

7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

- Timothy was to teach that family members in the Church should take on responsibility for widows in their family

— He was also to do so to encourage the widows to seek the Lord and be “blameless” instead of pursuing lives of wanton pleasure (v8)

(d) Without family (5:8)

8 But 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.

8 But 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.

8 If anyone does not take care of his own relatives, especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

8 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.

- Paul cited a commonly recognized responsibility to encourage the relatives of widows to maintain them (Cf. Rom 2:14)

— Family members have a universally recognized duty to care for one another (“provide for his own household”). Even unbelievers acknowledge this.

— If a Christian (“anyone” i.e., in the church) fails here, he behaves contrary to the teaching of his (“denied the”) faith and is, in this instance, worse than the typical unbeliever who helps his needy relations

— Even as He hung on the cross, the Lord Jesus made provision for His mother’s care (John 19:26-27)

Jesus called His disciples to be willing to give up the pleasures of family life to follow Him, not the responsibilities of family life (Luke 14:26). The care of family members is one of our ministry responsibilities.

These instructions do not rule out helping ungodly widows in the Church, of course. They just prohibit placing them on a list to receive regular official Church support. Should every Church have such a list? The NT does not command this, but it may have been customary in the 1st century churches.

(e) 60 years of age (5:9a)

(f) Wife of one man (5:9b)

9 A widow is to be **put on the list** only if she is not less than sixty years old, *having been* the wife of one man,

9 A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, *having been* the wife of one man,

9 A widow may be put on the widows’ list if she is at least sixty years old and has been the wife of one husband.

9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,

- "...put on the list" - to be enrolled and put on the "widow indeed" list, who received regular support from the congregation

— A widow had to meet three qualifications to get her name on the list:

1. At least 60 years of age. At this age, most widows typically become incapable of providing for their own needs and most do not have the opportunity to remarry.
2. Be the "wife of one man" (same qualification as elders and deacons, 3:2,12; Cf. note on v14); this would make her unqualified if she had been unfaithful, promiscuous or polyandrous. Remarriage after death of her spouse would not necessarily disqualify her.
3. An established reputation for good works (v10). Paul cited five examples: raised her children responsibly; hospitable; humbly served her Christian brothers and sisters; she helped people in need; and, had devoted herself to good works.

(g) Brought up children (5:10a)

(h) Hospitable (5:10b)

(i) Reputation for good works (5:10c)

10 having a reputation for good works; *and* if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, *and* if she has devoted herself to every good work.

10 having a reputation for good works; *and* if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, *and* if she has devoted herself to every good work.

10 She must be well known for her good actions as a woman who has raised children, welcomed strangers, washed the saints' feet, helped the suffering, and devoted herself to doing good in every way.

10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

- Cf. Dorcas and her widow friends (Acts 9:36-43)

- There is a definite connection between idleness and sin

(b) Younger widows (5:11-16)

(i) Younger widows are encouraged to marry and be blameless (5:11-15)

11 But refuse *to register* younger widows, for when they feel physical desires alienating them from Christ, they want to get married,

11 But refuse *to put* younger widows *on the list*, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married,

11 But do not include younger widows on your list. For whenever their natural desires cause them to lose their devotion to the Messiah, they want to remarry.

11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;

- Paul recommended against putting widows younger than 60 on the list, as their sensual desires would be stronger and these feelings would make it very hard for them to remain committed to serving Christ wholeheartedly as single women.

— This shows that Paul assumed a wholehearted commitment to the Lord characterized those on “the list”

12 *thereby* incurring condemnation, because they have ignored their previous pledge.

12 *thus* incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge.

12 They receive condemnation because they have set aside their prior commitment to the Messiah.

12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

- If the church leaders placed younger widows on “the list,” and they subsequently wanted to remarry, they would have to “set aside their prior commitment” of devotion to, and service of, Christ alone

— This “prior commitment” was probably a formal commitment taken upon the widow joining “the list” where the widow vowed to serve Christ entirely without thought of remarriage.

— Another interpretation is that perhaps a younger Christian widow faced with the temptation to marry an unbeliever (Cf. 1 Cor 7:39). Her sexual desires may overpower her commitment to do God’s will and lead her to live contrary to the faith she has professed.

In the ancient world it was next to impossible for a single or a widowed woman to earn her living honestly. She either had to marry, or had to dedicate her life completely to the service of the Church; there was no halfway house between the two.

13 At the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also *they become* gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention*.

13 At the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention*.

13 At the same time, they also learn how to be lazy while going from house to house. Not only this, but they even become gossips and keep busy by interfering in other people's lives, saying things they should not say.

13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

- Placing a younger widow on "the list" would open them up to the temptation of idleness and inconsistent behavior

- In short, they would fail to participate in constructive activities and instead become involved in destructive behavior

- In their visits to homes, they pick up private matters and spread them abroad. This is only a snare to those who go from home to home or church to church.

14 Therefore, I want younger *widows* to get married, have children, **manage their households**, and give the enemy no **opportunity** for reproach;

14 Therefore, I want younger *widows* to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach;

14 Therefore, I want younger widows to remarry, have children, manage their homes, and not give the enemy any chance to ridicule them.

14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

- In view of the possibilities described above, Paul encouraged younger widows to remarry

- Paul urged the younger widows to use their strength to bear children and care for their families, the primary duties of a Christian wife (Cf. Titus 2:5)

- In the ancient world, most people expected that a widow would remarry.

- "...manage their households" - *oikodespotein*, "keep house" or "rule the household"

- Since the husband is ultimately responsible to God for what happens in his home (3:4; Gen 3:16), Paul must have meant that the wife is to rule over the household under his authority

- Each marriage partner has a special sphere of activity (Prov 31:10-31)

- "...opportunity" - *aphormē*, a military term that means "a base of operations"

- By remarrying, the younger widows would not give the enemy (any accuser of believers, including Satan) an opportunity to criticize them for going back on their pledge to serve Christ as a "widow indeed"

- Evidently, this had already happened in the Ephesian church (v15)

- Paul's instruction to get married isn't mandatory for every young widow. This was a typical role of a young woman in Paul's day, and still is today, worldwide. This is an example of presenting the typical situation, with room for exceptions assumed.

- How can we resolve the apparent conflict between Paul advising young widows to marry in this verse with his forbidding the inclusion of widows married more than once on the "widow's list" (v9)?

— A "one man woman" does not mean married only once, but married in harmony with divine approval and social approval. The same principle underlies the elder qualification in 3:2.

The wife who works simply to get luxuries may discover too late that she has lost some necessities. It may be all right to have what money can buy, if you do not lose what money cannot buy. [Wiersbe]

15 for some have already turned away to follow Satan.

15 for some have already turned aside to follow Satan.

15 For some widows have already turned away to follow Satan.

15 For some are already turned aside after Satan.

- Satan is always alert to an opportunity to invade and destroy a Christian home

— Anyone who doesn't believe in Satan should try opposing him sometime

(ii) Widows with no family deserve support (5:16)

16 If any woman who is a believer has *dependent* widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are **actually widows**.

16 If any woman who is a believer has *dependent* widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

16 If any woman is a believer and has relatives who are widows, she should help them. The church should not be burdened, so it can help those widows who have no other family members to care for them.

16 If any man or woman that believes have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

- Paul sought to clarify a possible misunderstanding...financially capable women should assist the widows in their family so the church would not have to support them ("be burdened")

— This likely refers to "any woman" to clarify that this duty applied to women who did not have living or believing husbands

- "...actually widows" - widows who are without family; see note: **Three Types of Widows** in v4

(B) Elders (5:17-25)

(a) Pay (5:17-18)

17 The **elders** who lead well are to be considered worthy of **doublehonor**, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

17 Elders who handle their duties well should be considered worthy of double compensation, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.

- "...elders" - church overseers, not just older men in the congregation; elders were chosen, ordained, and set aside for the work (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Titus 1:5)

- Their qualifications are listed in 3:1-7

- From this verse, we learn that one role of an elder is to "rule" the church, in the sense of directing its affairs and giving oversight to all its activities (Cf. 1 Peter 5:1-4)

- "...double" - generous pay

- "...honor" - does not refer only to an honorarium, but the failure to give proper pay would imply a lack of honor

- At least part of this "honor" for the competent elder involved recognition for a job well done

- To interpret "double honor" to be twice the salary (of whom?) is nebulous. No one has proven that elders in the early church typically received pay for their ministry.

- The laborer is worthy of his reward (Deut 25:4; Cf. 1 Cor 9:7-14; Luke 10:7)

18 For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE IT IS THRESHING," and **"The laborer is worthy of his wages."**

18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and **"The laborer is worthy of his wages."**

18 For the Scripture says, "You must not muzzle an ox while it is treading out grain," and, **"A worker deserves his pay."**

18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, **The laborer is worthy of his reward.**

- Paul cited two scriptural authorities to support his instruction to those who serve the church as elders: Moses (Lev 19:13; Deut 24:15; 25:4; Cf. 1 Cor 9:9) and Jesus (Luke 10:7; Cf. Matt 10:10)

(b) Guidelines for rebuking an elder (5:19-20)

(i) Elder's reputation protected (5:19)

19 Do not accept an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

19 Do not accept an accusation against an elder unless it is supported "by two or three witnesses."

19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

- Criticism against church leaders is a favorite spectator sport, however Paul directs his readers to not entertain accusations against elders unless they are supported by two or three witnesses, who agreed to give evidence of wrongdoing (Cf. Deut 19:15; Matt 18:16; John 8:17; 2 Cor 13:1; Heb 10:28)

(ii) Elder's reprimand made known (5:20)

20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of *sinning*.

20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of *sinning*.

20 As for those who keep on sinning, rebuke them in front of everyone so that the rest will also be afraid.

20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

- Following a private rebuke, Timothy should publicly rebuke a persistently erring elder — The sin in view is difficult to ascertain, but this rebuke would discourage others from sinning

It is easy to slander any leader, and that is no less true of leaders within the church. It is also easy to be lenient towards them when they stumble, due to admiration and love for them, and wanting to show them mercy. The Bible warns against both pitfalls. We have to honor our elders and not accuse them lightly, but we cannot overlook their sins if the church is to be the pillar and foundation of truth. In the end, for good or ill, the trust will be revealed (v24-25).

(c) Selection (5:21-22)

(i) Without partiality (5:21)

21 I solemnly exhort you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of **His chosen angels**, to maintain these *principles* without bias, doing nothing in a *spirit of* partiality.

21 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of *His* chosen angels, to maintain these *principles* without bias, doing nothing in a *spirit of* partiality.

21 With God as my witness, as well as the Messiah Jesus and the chosen angels, I solemnly call on you to carry out these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the

basis of partiality.

21 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.

- Paul stresses the importance of absolute objectivity and honesty in dealing with offending leaders (Cf. 6:13; 2 Tim 4:1)

— God, Christ, and the elect angels are all judges (Matt 25:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Rev 14:10)

- "...chosen angels" - angels are elected by God, just like men/women

— These are the two-third of the angels who were elected not to fall with Satan; they are now confirmed in their holiness (are unable to sin)

— There are also "holy angels" (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26); these are unfallen angels

(ii) Without hastiness (5:22)

22 Do not **layhands** upon anyone too quickly and thereby share *responsibility* for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

22 Do not lay hands upon anyone *too* hastily and thereby share *responsibility* for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

22 Do not ordain anyone hastily. Do not participate in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

- Paul urged Timothy to minimize the possibility of elder failure by being extremely careful about whom he appointed in the first place

- "...lay hands" - public ordination

(d) Consumption of wine is appropriate for medicinal purposes (5:23)

23 Do not go on drinking only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

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

23 Stop drinking only water, but use a little wine for your stomach because of your frequent illnesses.

23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

- Paul may have realized that the process of elder discipline would have been hard on him physically and emotionally

— It appears from this verse that Timothy suffered from frequent illness, so Paul prescribed a little wine for medicinal purposes (not as a beverage)

- Abstinence not required, but there's no excuse for abuse in anything...

Harvest Times

The three principal feasts of the Jews corresponded to the three harvest seasons (Ex 23:16; 34:21-22)

- The Feast of the Passover in April at the time of the barley harvest (Ruth 1:22)
- The Feast of Pentecost (7 weeks later) at the wheat harvest (Ex 34:22)
- The Feast of Tabernacles at the end of the year (~October) during the fruit harvest

There is no "grape juice" available during the celebration of Passover. The grapes begin to ripen in August, but the gathering in for making wine and molasses (dibs), and the storing of the dried figs and raisins is at the end of September.

(e) Sin and good works of elder to be manifested at the judgment seat (5:24-25)

24 The sins of some people are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their *sins* follow after.

24 The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their *sins* follow after.

24 The sins of some people are obvious, leading them to judgment. The sins of others follow them there.

24 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.

- Timothy needed to be cautious about choosing church leaders

- Sin is not always obvious as soon as someone practices it, however eventually they will become known if the sins is persisted.

25 Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.

25 Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.

25 In the same way, good actions are obvious, and those that are not cannot remain hidden.

25 Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

- In the same way, good deeds can remain hidden for years

— Consequently, the better a church knows its potential elders, the fewer surprises they will present after their appointment

