



1 Timothy 5: Honouring God's Family, 11-12 March

Personal Preparation 1

By now the Christmas holidays would feel like a distant memory, but think back and try to remember if you spent any time with relatives. How did it go? Did you find it enjoyable or was it difficult when trying to relate to parents, uncles, aunties, siblings, nieces and nephews? In Timothy 5, we're reminded that church is a family in which we're supposed to relate to each other in ways that show our compassion and care. Relating in this way might not always be easy, but as we work our way through this passage, think about how better off our church will be if we have this attitude.

Read 1 Timothy 5:1-2

In the below table, write the 4 types of people Timothy needs to be very conscious about as a leader in the Ephesian church.

The person				
How Timothy should treat them?				

From these verses, is there an overall way of describing how Timothy should relate to people in his church?

From these verses to Timothy the leader, what does it say about the type of leader we should desire at our church?

At the moment, are there ways you yourself are you relating to someone in the church that's contrary to what it says in these verses? What do you need to do/change to start relating to that person in a godly way?

Personal Preparation 2

Not always, but men often die before women. Perhaps in your own family, you have experienced the sadness of your own father dying. And just as much as widows being left behind today, widows were left behind back in the 1st century AD as well. So let's now start looking at what 1 Timothy 5 says about widows in the church and how others should respond to them

Read 1 Timothy 5:3-16

What are the 3 verses in which the phrase is used, 'widows who are really in need' ?

From these verses, who are the widows who are *not* 'really in need'?

What should the response be to these widows?

List the (many) reasons given in verses 4, 8 and 16 for a family to take care of their elderly parents or grandparents?

Back in Ephesus, the care of the elderly would have looked very different today – no hospitals, nursing homes, meals on wheels, blue-care, pensions, or superannuation. No government/organised welfare system at all. But even with the differences, how are these verses still relevant for Christians today?

If you have elderly parents or grandparents, are they being cared for as they should?

Group Discussion

In Personal Preparation this week, we started to look at how we should relate to people in the *family* of our church. 1 Timothy 5 helps us correct any sort of 'cheap' view that we might have of each other. If church really is a family, that means we should treat this family as very precious indeed. In Group Discussion time, we'll continue on with the topic of widows, before we move on to look at elders.

Start by sharing any good examples you have seen of families caring for widows.

Read 1 Timothy 5:3-24

1. What reasons are given for children and grandchildren to take care of the widows within their family? Given the modernised welfare system that we have today, how are the words of verses 4, 8, and 16 still relevant for Christians today?

2. Verse 9 mentions 'the list of widows'. It is not ever said what happens with the women on the list. Some take this list as those widows who 'are really in need' (v3, v5, v16) and will receive support from the Ephesian church. There are others who take this list as meaning those widows who can offer a support and leadership to other women in the church. Which ever way you take it, what is it about these women that make them worthy of honour and respect?



3. When you go through the list in verses 9 and 10, do they surprise you as qualities worthy of honour? If so, why?

4. Does the world honour these qualities as much as the church? What does the world honour?

5. If you're a wife and mother, do you ever look down on these qualities yourself? Why is this so? How can you go about changing your view?

Verses 11-14 are difficult verses. At one point (verse 11), it seems Paul is strongly against younger widows remarrying. But then in verse 14, he counsels younger widows to marry (verse 14). Is there a contradiction? These are hard verses to work out. Something we should consider is that in 1 Corinthians 7:39, Paul states that a widow is free to marry again, as long as they are a Christian. So Paul is not against widows remarrying. It is probable that in 1 Timothy 5:11-12, the mention of 'overcoming their dedication to Christ', and 'broken their first pledge', are references to a breaking of a promise to remain pure. Perhaps they are being tempted to marry men who are not Christian.

Let's move on from thinking about one group of people in the church, the widows, to another group, the elders. In verses 17-24, Paul gives us a number of quick single-verse lessons about how the church should view the role of eldership.

6. From verses 17-18, what is the lesson about elders?

7. From verse 19, what is the lesson about elders?

8. What is the danger to the church if the words of verse 19 are not obeyed?

9. What is the danger to the church if the words of verse 20 are not obeyed?

It's worth thinking more about this topic of 'discipline' for church leaders. Does this mean that elders will be perfect? No. But they are more accountable and the example of their lives can have more of an influence on others. Perhaps the most obvious time to apply the words of verse 20 is when an elder does not repent of his sin, even after others have gone to rebuke him privately – verse 19. The big lesson in all of this is: the church shouldn't entertain unsubstantiated allegations against an elder, but at the same time, the sin of an elder must be taken especially seriously.

10. From the verse 21, what is the lesson about elders?

11. What is the danger to the church if the words of verse 21 are not obeyed?

12. From verse 22, what is the lesson about elders? Note: 'laying on of hands' is a reference to the 'commissioning' of new elders – when other elders lay their hands on them (See 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

13. What is the danger to the church if the words of verse 21 are not obeyed?

14. How do verses 24-25 give focus to what Timothy should be careful about when looking to choose and commission new elders?

When Paul is giving his instruction to Timothy, he can't help but talk about elders. Already in chapter 3, Paul has spoken on what should be the qualifications of a prospective elder. Now in chapter 5, he speaks of what should be the church's attitude to elders. Obviously, godly leadership in the church is critically important to God's purpose for the church – to help people 'to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth' (1 Timothy 2:4).

Please pray for church leaders.