

1 Timothy 5:1-16 “How to Care for the Church”

Timothy, a church planting assistant of Apostle Paul, is now pastoring a church in Ephesus (modern day Turkey) It was a city located on the West coast of Asia Minor. It is one of the seven churches that are mentioned in the book of Revelation. In this passage, he is not only receiving advice and counsel from the Apostle Paul, but this letter is teaching him how to set forth God’s main concern for a strong, healthy local church (referring to the people in the community and not the buildings in which they gathered). We are going to talk about three main points as we study the Word of God.

- 1) In verses one and two, the Apostle Paul is emphasizing on the way that Timothy is to relate to different people in the church.
- 2) Verses three through eight, Paul talks about two main points with Timothy.
 - a) How to really care for those in need in the congregation.
 - b) How to discern those who are truly in need.
- 3) Finally, in verses nine through sixteen Paul talks about the qualifications of those serving in the church. You’ll notice it is not just officers, but those serving the officers of the church. Paul sets high standards for the elders, deacons, even for those who have no title in the church. They have to meet certain standards of Christian living.

This passage is a bit strange. It is quite different from 1 Timothy 1, 2, 3 and 4. Paul’s personal interaction with Timothy is left behind for the moment. Paul focuses on how the church needs to set its priorities to be in good standing, strong and healthy as the Almighty God intends it to be. Some of these principles could seem a bit distant for us because we live in a wealthy culture where we have 401(k), whole life insurance, investments, nursing homes and much more. We are far better off than these people were because they didn’t have all these options available back then. The Apostle Paul is instructing Timothy about the proper way to care for the church in this passage. These principles are still significant to us these days even though we live in different era. Let’s look at these three principles

I. The Church must be a dwelling place of mutual accountability. But care has to do with the manner that we relate to different kinds of members

The church is to be a place of mutual accountability. The New Testament makes it clear that we have to hold one another accountable. Christians are meant to live in a relationship of dependence on God and interdependence with other followers of Jesus. A fellow believer should not try to destroy you but rather to build you up and also be willing to admit that they could be wrong in their judgments and criticism. Paul said to Timothy: do not sharply rebuke an older man; you’re to appeal to them as fathers. And do not speak to younger men with arrogance. But treat them like brothers. Merriam Webster definition for rebuke is “to criticize sharply”. Paul is basically telling Timothy that: **The church is a family, we’re a family in the local church** and we are to relate to one another as family. Do not speak to an older man with harshness and depreciating way when he sins or makes mistakes. Use genuine kindness and concern as if he were your own father. In doing so,

they will be more prone to listen and turn away from their wicked ways and live a life that pleases God.

Paul goes on to say in verse 2a: You appeal to older women as mothers. With all humility, a searching of heart, kindly reprimand them in their wrong doing. Challenge them to live the Christian life they are called to. In verse 2b, Paul said to treat the **younger women as sisters in all purity**. They are to be reprimanded as well and to be dealt in all purity (*means cleanliness, transparency*). Protect these young women on a physical, emotional and spiritual level. Timothy was to be cautious in his relationships with females, especially younger females. He was to deal with them with the utmost, highest integrity and sexual purity so that he would be above reproach.

II. The Church must demonstrate Christ's love tangibly to those in need, but do not preempt the family

In this passage the Apostle Paul explains to Timothy the key role of family and church in the care of the Christians in the congregation who are in need. Paul clarifies for Timothy that while the church is to show Christ's love physically, tangibly (*NLT-John 13:35*) to those in need, he clearly says do not preempt the families of these members in helping in time of need. **NLT-John 13:35** says: "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." Their love was not simply in words but it was certainly in the way their love was conveyed. For example washing the disciple's feet. For us these days, we can do a chore for someone, hold the door, help carry a load, give our time and money, and lend our ear to listen to someone's struggles and offer help and comfort. In Acts 2 and 6, the world noticed something amazing was going on because of the way the Christian Church cared for the needy. Paul is telling Timothy this is how the church in Ephesus is to be because it is a witness to the world that we belong to Christ Jesus.

Paul reiterates to Timothy that the church has a definite responsibility to care for these widows in great need. And those that are receiving support from the church must be widow indeed. In verses 5 and 6 Paul plainly describes a widow as a woman who has no children, no brothers or sisters. No family members at all to care for her. She is all alone. She is a woman who has fully committed her life to Christ and a woman that has a reputation of good deeds. Paul was aware of the children who don't take the responsibility to care for family members. Look what he says in verse 8: If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. Paul is telling Timothy that the family first has to bear the responsibilities of other family members. And the church will show care for those who need it the most.

III. The Christian life was never about getting, taking or receiving, it is all about giving

In verses nine through sixteen, Paul makes it clear that these widows who are supported by the church are to give back to the ministry of church. In addition, Paul says that those

who serve alongside the elders and deacons have to be held to the highest standards of a Christian life. Paul gives Timothy some strict warning about putting younger widows on this list. We can see how difficult it can be for a younger woman who makes a pledge to serve the church in exchange for the church's support of her in her time of need and then deciding later that she would rather remarry. Paul advised Timothy not to put these women in the list. Instead, allow them to remarry, have a family and children rather than to make such a commitment to the church. Here, we can see that Paul isn't just looking to fill an opening in the ministry. He looks out for the happiness of those who are ministering as well.

-CONCLUSION

Nowadays, we have a tendency to think of volunteers in terms of what skills they have or what they have to offer. But Paul says first to look at the character of those who are volunteering in the church and unless they meet certain Christian standards, do not allow them to minister. We must understand that we are a family in the local church. We must care for one another and hold each other accountable so that we continuously grow in the love of Jesus Christ. Don't just use our volunteers. But show them tangible love so that the world may see our good deeds and glorify God. In return, those who don't know Christ will accept Him in their lives as their personal Savior and develop a personal relationship with Him.