

Study 6- 1 Timothy

Read 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2

To Older Saints

Being a young man, Timothy had to be careful in his relationship to the older believers in the church. The word “elders” here refers to age, not office. The pastor is not to rebuke older saints, but exhort and encourage them. “Look upon them as you would your own parents,” Paul advises (Titus 2:1–4). The church needs to recognize the needs and problems of the older believers and seek to help them. “Senior saints” are important to the church, and the younger people of the church need them more than they may realize (1 Peter 5:1–7).

To Widows

The early church cared for needy widows. Timothy had to be careful not to misuse the church funds by giving money to unworthy widows. In his day, as today, there were deceivers who preyed on people under the cover of religion. Such people usually visited churches because they knew that soft-hearted saints would give them a handout “for Jesus sake.” Note that vs. 4 says that the family has the first responsibility of caring for their needy. Too much of God’s money, given by faithful worshipers, has gone to waste because well-meaning Christians followed their emotions instead of God’s Word.

To Church Leaders

Apparently, Timothy was having trouble with some of his officers. Part of the problem may have been from the fact that he had chosen and ordained some of them too quickly. Another factor was that he had misjudged some of them and made some hasty decisions. Pastors make mistakes, even if their hearts are right! But then, officers make mistakes too. Church officers and leaders are important, because they help the pastor to carry the load. But the pastor must always be the shepherd of the flock. The best thing a church officer can do is to make it possible for the pastor to exercise his spiritual gifts and ministries without hindrance or distraction. Then the church will prosper.

To Slaves

Slavery was an integral part of ancient life; it is estimated that there were 6 million slaves in the Roman Empire. Many slaves found Christ, but their master often remained unbelievers. Paul urges them to be good testimonies to their unsaved masters that their masters might learn to respect the name of God and His Word.

Read 1 Timothy 5:1-2

1. Paul instructs us how to treat those around us. How do these instructions differ from one another, and why do you think they differ?
 - a. Older men
 - b. Younger men
 - c. Older women

d. Younger women

2. Which group is easiest for you to relate with: Older men, Older women, Younger men, Younger women? Why do you think this is so?

Read 1 Timothy 5:3-16

3. Paul's instruction about how to handle the needs of widows take up more verses than any other topic in this letter. Why do you think this issue was so important to him?

4. Why would Paul say that a widow with children or grandchildren was not "really in need"? Does our society live by that principle today? Explain

5. Even today, widows have unique needs that "slip through the cracks." What needs if any have you seen go unmet? How could the church do better at meeting these needs?

6. What reason does Paul give for not putting younger widows on such a list? (5:11-13).

Read 1 Timothy 5:17-25

7. What principle does Paul introduce in 5:17? How does he support this in 5:18?

8. Why do you think preaching and teaching are singled out for special attention?

9. What is the proper way to bring an accusation against an elder according to 5:19?

10. What words of wisdom and caution does Paul give Timothy in verse 5:22?

Read 1 Timothy 6:1-2

11. What general principle does Paul lay out for slaves in 6:1-2?

12. Slaves were told to honor their masters. What does that look like for us today if practiced?

Effective Care for the Needy

Followers of Christ have the potential to be among the world's most effective agents for social service. They have the example of Christ to follow. They have the motivation of doing compassionate work in His name. They have the structure, community life, and pooled resources of their congregations. And they have the model of the early church, which provided standards for the systematic, ongoing care for the widows. We can learn a great deal about delivering services to the needy by carefully observing the principles that Paul set forth for Timothy and the believers at Ephesus.

The care described here was regular and ongoing for people who were "taken in the number" (5:9), that is, put on a list of continuing recipients of the church's support. It was assumed that the church was to give short term support to people who needed help until they could get back on their feet, but not to any able-bodied people who refused to work to support themselves. The care was for widows who were really widows. The Old Testament described a widow as a woman who had no one to support her and therefore depended on the protection of the community. If a widow had able-bodied children or grandchildren, she needed to depend on them for provision, not the church. A widow who was "taken into the number" incurred certain responsibilities in order to maintain her eligibility for the church's charity. For example, she needed to be frugal lest someone reproach her for living an extravagant lifestyle and the fellowship for supporting it. Likewise she needed to meet certain criteria related to her earlier life and character. The point was not to keep a widow out of the program, but to ensure that she served her fellow believers in every way she could if she was going to receive support.

Younger widows were expected to remarry and was common for the day, and bear children (who presumably would care for their parents in their old age). Again, the church needed to avoid offering long term support to someone who had other options. To do so might contribute to idleness, laziness and gossip.

1 Timothy 5 specifically addresses the care of widows, but its principles apply to a much broader range of human need. By using this and other biblical texts to develop social programs, believers can effectively care in a way that honors the name of Christ and provides real help to needy people.