

GUARDIANS OF THE MINISTRY

1ST TIMOTHY 5:1-6:2

Notes on

1 Timothy 5:1-6:2

How is Timothy to relate to different types of people in the church he is to lead? Paul gives instructions concerning Timothy's dealings with older men, younger men, older women, younger women, widows, elders and slaves. Along the way he identifies two problem groups (younger widows - vv.3-16 and elders - vv. 17-22) and tells Timothy what to do with them.

vv.5:1-2 - rebuke... encourage...

Paul has told Timothy he must exercise godly authority over men who would have likely all been older than him, who were teaching things that were false. Now he tells him *how* he is to do this: As though each one were his father, not harshly or violently but with words of encouragement accompanying his clear exhortations toward what is right & true... Paul himself models this kind of exhortation with his instructions to his "son" in the faith, and this "family feel" is to characterize all the other relationships in the church as well. We are truly "brothers & sisters, mothers & fathers and sons & daughters" in God's family.

v.3-8 - widows... As prescribed in Jewish law centuries before them, church members were committed to care for those who had lost their husbands... In providing such care, though, they would need to distinguish between different kinds of widows: those who are **truly widows** (really in need) vs. those who are not and those who truly serve and **hope in God**, as demonstrated in their **prayer** life, vs. those who are **self indulgent**, opposing God (perhaps supporting & adding to the false teaching and divisive forces of the day) and trusting in their own feminine wiles and sensual means... Help for widows is to come first, if possible, from family members... **Children and grandchildren** by their care will be 1) showing their godliness, 2) repaying their parents' goodness to them, 3) pleasing

Instructions for the Church

5 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ² older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

³ Honor widows who are truly widows. ⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. ⁵ She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, ⁶ but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. ⁷ Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. ⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

⁹ Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, ¹⁰ and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. ¹¹ But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry ¹² and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. ¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. ¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. ¹⁵ For some have already strayed after Satan. ¹⁶ If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." ¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. ²³ (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) ²⁴ The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. ²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

6 Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. ² Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.

- 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2

God, 4) avoiding rightful community reproach and 5) doing their part to reduce unnecessary burdens on the church.

vv.9-10 - ... Three criteria are given here to determine if a woman should be given support from church resources: 1) At least **sixty years of age**... In Paul & Timothy's day, this was the age of retirement, when "old age" was seen to begin.

At such an age, a woman would have little or no opportunity to remarry. 2) **Wife of one husband**... This certainly indicates faithfulness in marriage. It may also suggest that she has resisted the real temptation to care for herself through immoral practices (either prostitution or finding men who would take care of her as a mistress). 3) **Reputation for good works**... Four examples of such "good works" are suggested... **brought up children**

(her own and maybe others' in an age when unwanted infants were not uncommonly simply discarded and died of exposure), **showed hospitality**... **washed the feet of the saints** (this indicates a servant-spirit toward other believers)... and **cared for the afflicted**...

vv.11-15 - The real problem is younger widows. First, Paul suggests, their natural desire to share themselves with a man means they do not want to remain widows. And when the church says they ought to remain so, they may be drawn away from Christ. He also says that young widows are tempted toward an unholy lifestyle much different than the one just described and detrimental to the health of the church. It is better, Timothy is told, for younger widows to remarry and apply themselves to the needs of their own household...

vv.17-18 - **Elders** are in view here. It is the word *presbuteros* (from which we get the word "Presbyterian") and probably refers to all the leaders of the church—elders, pastors, deacons, overseers, etc. They are to **rule**, managing the affairs of the church. This management includes **teaching and preaching**. And they are worthy of being

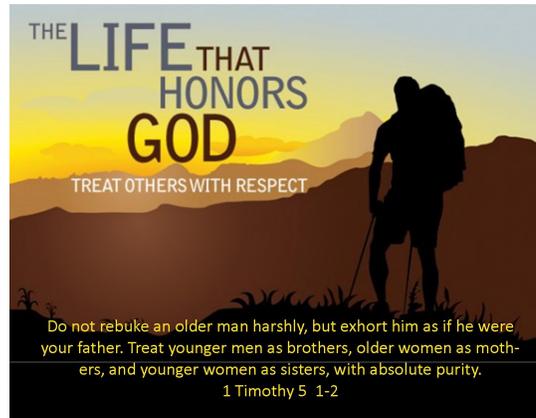
paid their **wages**. In supporting this idea, Paul quotes both the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 25:4) and Jesus (Luke 10:7).

vv.19-20 - Here Paul talks about elders and church discipline, commending two primary principles: 1) No unverified charges are to be brought against an elder; and 2) Public rebuke is to be part of the penalty for those who are validly charged with wrongdoing and found guilty. This will serve as a powerful warning to others.

v.21-25 - Paul charges Timothy to implement these things without

partiality (no special treatment for the wealthy or influential) and to keep himself **pure** (with an inner purity of heart rather than merely outward abstention from things like **wine**). Then he reminds him that all **sins**, whether immediately obvious or not, are in the end revealed to and by God. And the same is true of **good works**.

6:1-2 - Slaves, people **under the yoke of bondservants**, were a part of communities throughout the Roman Empire, including apparently Ephesus. Paul reminds Timothy to remind such people that their membership in God's family means they should respect and serve their believing masters all the more rather than use their common faith as an excuse for doing otherwise. Advice to slaves in the 1st-century can provide good principles for us in terms of our employer-employee relationships today.



Read & Reflect - 5:1-6:2

First Reading: What do you learn from this passage about caring for others?

Search & Consider

5:1-2 - Why is it important to deal with people as though they are "family" in the church?

5:3-16 - What clues do we find here as to how people might have been abusing the church's responsibility to care for the poor? (see esp. vv.4, 6, 8, 9-10, 11, 13 & 16)

5:8 - Why do you think Paul equates failure to care for one's own family with denying the faith?

5:17-18 — Who is worthy of “double honor”? What does “double honor” mean? Why is this an important part of church life?

5:19-20 - Why is it important to be cautious when elders are accused of sin? To be public when charges are true?

5:21-23 - What four charges does Paul give Timothy here regarding his own life?

6:1-2 - What does Paul say here to slaves? What are they to do? Why? How do these instructions speak to us in a culture where slavery is wisely and righteously illegal?

Apply

1. List principles of caregiving we learn in this passage with the verse they come from. (Example: “Help those truly in need - v.3”)
2. Summarize, if you can, all these principles with one overarching statement regarding Christian caregiving.

For Small Group Discussion - 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2

- A. OPENER...** Who are the needy in our community? What problems do they face? How do we distinguish between those in genuine need who are worthy of the church's care and support and those who are not?
- B. 1 TIMOTHY 5:1-6:2...** Share your Personal Study Guide answers above... As time permits, you may also want to focus on these questions...
1. Reflect together on vv. 24-25... “The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.”
 2. How have you seen this principle about things—sins and good works alike—being obvious now or revealed later but not remaining hidden worked out in real-life situations?

A FINAL THOUGHT...

What are we as a church doing for those truly in need around us? What should we be doing that we are not?

Covenant
Presbyterian
Church

The Elderly in America: A New Situation

Richard Peace in his commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy (Littleton, Colorado: Serendipity House, 1988) offers the following essay. It is a little dated, but it does offer some insight and inspiration concerning one area of caregiving in which the church today is called to engage with loving energy and enthusiasm...

Phone: 775-746-8118

Fax: 775-746-8195

covenant-reno.org

The problem that Paul dealt with had to do with the economic and social conditions in the first-century Roman world. That society was structured in such a way that women were in a large part dependent upon their husbands for their livelihood. Single, working women, living on their own independently did not exist as a class. The typical pattern was for a woman to remain a part of her birth family until she married and then her care was transferred to that of her new husband. If her husband died, she had a limited set of options. She could, perhaps, return to her family. Or live with her children if they were grown. It would be most difficult to live on her own since there were few ways by which she could earn a living in order to support herself. Consequently, older widows without families could easily find themselves in a desperate situation.

To varying degrees this has been true down through the ages. The elderly, particularly widows, have had a difficult time. However, all this may be changing, at least in America in the late 20th century. In her perceptive study of American culture entitled Cities on a Hill (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), Frances Fitzgerald notes that aging has taken on a new form in the 1970's and 80's. She notes that for the first time in history a whole generation has reached old age with its membership almost intact. She writes: "Until this century,

death had no more relation to old age than it had to any other period of life. In fact, it had less. In seventeenth-century France, for example, a quarter of all human beings died before the age of one, another quarter died before the age of twenty, and a third quarter before the age of forty-five; only ten out of a hundred people reached the age of sixty." She goes on: "In 1900, the average life expectancy for children born in the United States was 47.3 years. In 1980 it was 73.6" (p.205). The reasons for this new longevity on such a wide scale are obvious to all of us: better medical care, antibiotics and other drugs, a decrease in the infant mortality rate, and so on.

The fact that so many people are living longer is not the only new factor for the elderly. The elderly in America are better off financially than ever before. In fact, as Fitzgerald notes, for the past ten years "the economic situation of older people has improved both absolutely and relative to that of younger people... Between 1970 and 1976, the median income for younger people increased by only 4 percent, whereas it increased by around 20 percent for those sixty-five and older." She concludes: "The present generation of people in their sixties and seventies may be the most privileged generation of elderly people in history... They are the first generation of healthy, economically independent retired people in history—and, in the absence of significant economic growth, they may well be the last one" (p.208-209).

All this means that the elderly are less dependent than ever before on the care of others.

But, of course, this is not the whole story. Modern medicine can only stave off illness so long. Eventually, our bodily systems break down, and we decline and die. As a result, while those in their sixties and seventies may be healthy, by the time they are in their eighties, disability and death become a significant factor. This means that the generation that reached old age with most of its number still alive, will suddenly have to face death all together at once. It is here where the ministry of the church will be of inestimable value.



Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. 1 Timothy 5:3-4

