Relationships Within the Church

1 Timothy 5:1-16 (NKJV)

- One of the top reasons that Paul wrote Timothy this letter was to help him with the things that take place within the church.
- These two letters are chalked full of practical counsel on how to run the church, how to choose godly leadership, what should be the focus of the church, and here in Chapter 5, he even covers relationships with the young and the older folks in the church.
- How should a young pastor treat the older and the younger, both male and female? Then, he will speak to him about those needy within the church, specifically the widows, how should they be handled, and what is the church’s responsibility vs. what is their family’s responsibility.
- So with that, let’s read verses 1 through 16, and get our bearings a bit.

Vs. 1-2—“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.”

- Timothy, in Chapter 5, verse 21, was reminded not to show partiality to those within the body. He was to minister to every person, male and female, in every season, old and young.
- It was also a way for young Timothy to make sure he did not just favor the young and overlook the older generation in the church.

It’s one of the things I am blessed by here at Wildwood. Look around; we have every age from 9 years old to 90 years old. I have never purposed in my heart that we would target one particular generation in our weekend services. In our staff meetings and/or retreats, we have never brought up how we can better target the young or the old. I am not running out getting tattoos so that I can connect with the younger; I am not dying my hair or beard so that I look younger, and on the flip side, I am not putting on a suit and tie, or a Hawaiian shirt so that I can connect with the older. We want you to have a genuine life changing experience with Jesus Christ. That’s the most important thing here.

- And here in Chapter 5, verse 1, Paul is reminding Timothy how to conduct himself with the older and the younger generation.
• “Young Timothy, when it comes to the old guys in the church, if you have to correct them, don’t rebuke them, exhort them like a father.”
• In other words, you should respect his age, his season of life, and his grey hair or lack of hair.
• If you rebuke him, he is going to say that you’re too young, but if you choose to exhort, he will see your humility and respect for him and you might just win him over.

I like to ask questions with those who are older and wiser. If I know they’re off on something, it happens. I often choose to ask them questions to get them thinking. I might ask them what they believe the Bible says about a certain topic, knowing well that their stance is not biblical, hoping that I can win them over by the authority of scripture and not by my opinion. I’m always making sure I don’t talk down to them, but rather that I am listening and respecting them, building a bridge to bring understanding and even change. I can learn a lot from the older guys. Old guys rule, right?

• Treat the younger men like your brothers, co-laborers, not looking down on them for their youth. Also, treat the women like your mothers, with love and respect, and then the young girls like your sister, guarding them, protecting them, but in purity.
• Next, Paul would move to the widows and to those who are in need.

Vs. 3—“Honor widows who are really widows.”

• The word “honor” can be translated “to support or sustain.”
• That’s what Paul is getting at here.
• It’s important to understand, in our day, there is a social system in place that helps during the retirement years.

My father is 82, and gets social security. There is a retirement that he gets from mom’s pension, and his health plan is still in tact, so he has chosen not to live with us. We have offered, but he likes his space and at this time, he can afford it. If he ever changes his mind, we have already made a space in our house for him.
• But in Paul’s day, the day of the New Testament, there was no social security or retirement plans you could buy into, and so the church
became the institution to help those who were in need, not just widows, but also the poor.

- We see this take place in the first church in Jerusalem. The widow’s ministry had grown so large that they raised up the first seven deacons to oversee it. Notice…

“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business…”’ Acts 6:1-3 (NKJV)

- So there were men who God raised up to take care of the widow’s ministry. They did not just shut it down because it was taking over the time of prayer and the Word, but rather they saw the opportunity for some of the godly men to serve.
- And it’s here, in Chapter 5 of First Timothy, that Paul will give some further instructions on this ministry, probably to help answer some of Timothy’s questions about the widows and even the needy.
- Notice…

Vs. 4—“But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.”

- In other words, those who are widows or even those in need, who have family, should look to them first for assistance.
- It’s the responsible thing for family to do—take care of one another.
- Notice he reminds the family; it’s a way for the adult children to repay their parents for the assistance given to them when they were young.
- Remember all the baseball teams you were on, those special cleats you had to have; remember the dirt bikes you had to have, that special snowboard you had to have, all the dates that mom and dad paid for.
- And then that wedding, the over-the-top wedding, you had dreamed of since you were 10—girls, you do that.
• Well, now it’s payback. If mom or dad can’t afford to put food on the table or take care of themselves in their latter years, then we get the blessing of coming alongside of them and taking care of that.
• Even Jesus knew that His mother needed to be taken care of. When He went to the cross, He gave John the responsibility of taking care of her.

“When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’ And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.” John 19:26-27 (NKJV)

• Most likely, Joseph had already gone onto paradise, and now Jesus takes care of His mother by asking John to watch over her.
• Let’s go on…

Vs. 5—“Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.”

• Notice, she who is really a widow—speaking of those who are truly left alone, no relatives to help with her care, and no social security to help with the needs—these are those that the church were to take care of.
• But notice she is also to be one who trusts God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.
• In other words, she is to live a godly life and should be serving the Lord and the church by giving herself to intercession.
• Her ministry is that of prayer.
• So if the church helps her, then she is to work by praying for the church. She is to be a prayer warrior.
• Again, Paul will qualify; notice…

Vs. 6—“But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.”

• If you’re living a godly life, then you can receive assistance. If not, and you’re just living for pleasure, then it’s appropriate to say, based on what Paul is saying here, that the church is not obligated to assist you.
• Paul will even say she is dead while she lives. That’s not a rebuke from a young pastor, Paul is in his 70’s when he writes this, so he is in the latter years of his life. Therefore, he is talking to the widow like a sister.
In essence, he is saying, if you’re living only to get what you can out of this life, a life of pleasure, a life that has no eternal value, then you’re not living well. That’s a dead life.

And that’s true for anyone who is living for the flesh, these worldly pleasures, and not eternal treasures.

“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” Romans 8:6-8 (NKJV)

Notice, the life of the flesh, the life that is carnally minded brings death.

Paul would say it this way in Galatians…

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV)

Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

He did not say that those who stumble in these things from time to time, but those who practice. A Christian doesn’t practice these things. He has a conviction about these things, and when he is tripped up, he gets back up. He doesn’t stay there.

And then the warning—if you do, if you practice these things, then it’s evidence that you’re not in the faith.

And so Paul qualifies a true widow is a godly widow, one who walks with God, and one that does not have a family to care for her.

Notice the exhortation to the family…

Vs. 7-8—“And these things command, that they may be blameless. 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.”

It’s always God’s desire that we work to provide for our homes.

And for the Christian man, he has the Lord on his side in this.
• It will always be the will of God for you to work and provide for your family, so don’t let fear take you for a ride; work will happen.
• Now it’s understandable if you get hurt and can’t work that this can be a struggle and that’s why we pay into disability.
• However, just sitting at home and watching TV or Netflix, while your kids are hungry and your house is falling apart when you can work is never going to be the will of God.
• Solomon, in his wisdom, reminds the lazy man to wake up, and he would even go the ant as an illustration on the importance of work.
• Notice…

“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man.” Proverbs 6:6-11 (NKJV)

• Especially for the believer, you have a God who has a plan for your life, a God who can open doors that no one can shut!
• Notice Paul will even say, “If you’re not providing for your household, then you have denied the faith and are worse than an unbeliever.”
• Why would he say such a thing? Again, if a Christian is anything, he is a person of faith. We have faith in a God that moves mountains, that opens doors, that has a future and a hope for us.
• Remember what He said through Jeremiah the prophet…

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV)

• And when we are not working and checked out about it, then we have lost faith. That’s what non-believers do, not believers.
• We are to be on the believing side of things—believing believers.

Vs. 9-10—“Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged
strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.”

• So if you’re under sixty and a widow, then the thought is that you can still work and earn a living or even re-marry.
• Again, notice she is also to have a godly lifestyle. She was committed to her marriage before her spouse’s death, given to hospitality, living a life of faith and fruitfulness.
• Now, notice here that Paul says, “If she has brought up children…”
• This can be taken two ways. It could be speaking of her own children, but if so, then she would not be considered for help because she had living children who would now be adults and could take care of her. Therefore, this could be mean that they she had children and they died, so she is now a true widow.
• The second possibility is that she is given to rising up children that are not her own, orphans.
• It’s a great model that our friends Allen and Shannon Reid, who are starting up an orphanage in Africa, are following.
• They are going to bring in the widows to raise up the orphans to be a mother, to bring structure, but also it takes care of the two of the most needy in Africa—the widows are poor and barely surviving and are just like the orphans, put them together and they can take care of one another.
• And then he speaks to the younger widows…

Vs. 11-16—“But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some have already turned aside after Satan. If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”
Paul is not saying here that the young widows with the desire to marry is a bad thing; it’s actually a good thing.

To want to re-marry in your youth after losing your spouse is very normal—wanting companionship, even wanting to have kids or more kids, wanting to enjoy life with someone and all the seasons that life brings, kids, grandkids, great-grandkids.

But let me also remind you to be careful not to jump into marriage too quickly.

If you’re married and divorced, or widowed, and loneliness sets in along with impatience, you could end up signing up for something that was not God’s heart at all, but once you marry, it’s till death do you part.

It’s the will of God for you stay together, so be careful in all that.

The other thing that can happen is that your desire for companionship becomes so consuming that you end up going to the wrong places and engaging in worldly conduct.

That’s what Paul is getting at here when he says in verse 12, “…having condemnation because they cast off their first faith.”

You’re not going to find the spouse of your dreams hanging out at the local bar, or hitting up the dance clubs, or even playing the slots at the casinos.

The best thing you can do is fill up your time serving Jesus, get into ministry, use your gifts for the kingdom, and go on a few mission trips. God can bring that spouse into your life right there as you’re serving Him, finding contentment in Him.

Jesus nailed it when He gave us this command in Matthew’s gospel…

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)

In our marriage, in our singleness, in our relationships with younger and older, and even with those who are widows.

God always has a plan for us in every season. The key is to seek Him and He will show you His plan.