

An Appeal For Respect And Honor

1 Timothy 5:1-4

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¹Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. ³Honor widows who are truly widows. ⁴But 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.

⁵She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, ⁶but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.

Have you ever wondered how should we address each other in the church? More importantly, why are should we address each other in the way Paul prescribes to Timothy?

Today, if we look at the institutions of this world, very rarely you will see people addressing each other this way. For example, if you work in corporate America, pretty much is called by their first name. Sometimes, they may be addressed by their last name. Mr or Mrs Smith and so on. If you look in civil government, people are addressed by their role or title like representative, congressman, councilor, senator or secretary, governor, president and so on.

In academic institutions, you address others by their educational qualifications like a Dr so and so or instructor. In the medical field you address people by their titles or their roles like a doctor or a nurse. Perhaps, there is some level of professionalism attached to each of these titles or roles that have attached to that particular role.

However, Paul defines the church in a very relational sense. The church, Paul says, in 1 Timothy 3:16 “*is the family, the household, the home of God*”. So if you notice the way that Paul instructs Timothy to relate to each other is by using very familial terms like father, mother, brother and sister.

Paul removes the tag of “professionalism”. Its only in the family that you address the parent as father or mother. And siblings as brother or sister.

So the church is not a professional society. The church is not a social club. The church is not an entertainment hub. The church is the pillar and foundation of truth. Truth and revealed in the Bible. Period.

The church is also the household of God. Who belongs in that household?

The children of God belong to that household.

Now Paul tells us in his other letters that we did not become children of God by natural birth. Nobody does. But we became children of God by *adoption*. We were like orphans once. We were like rebellious children deserving wrath but God adopted us by His great Love.

“He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” Ephesians 1:5 (NASB)

“God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ” Ephesians 1:5 (NLT)

And how did you become a child of God? By *receiving* the gift of salvation found only in Jesus Christ. Here are a few pointers even though this is different subject and sermon.

*“For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of **adoption** as sons and daughters by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”” Romans 8:15*

*“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the **right** to become children of God” John 1:12*

And what is indicative, symbolic or symptomatic of a child of God?

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him”

“Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.”
1 John 3:1, 8-10

So a child of God is someone who is a practitioner of righteousness!

So the question for us in light of this passage is this: How do the children of God, the brothers and sisters in the household of God, how does the family of God *relate* to each other?

Paul gives us plenty of instruction. Not everything but enough.

How should you relate to an older man, to older women, to younger men, to younger women?

Look at verses one and two.

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.

Paul tells younger Timothy to not rebuke not to chastise not to scold an older man. Why does Paul say this and why does he begin this way?

Well, remember Paul is writing to Timothy to confront false teachers in the church? These false teachers or others in the church are probably older than Timothy. And Timothy is already known for being sort of a timid man. Paul had already addressed the issue of his youth in the previous chapter. *“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity”* 1 Timothy 4:12

Paul knows that Timothy as a young man has not just the task of pastoring and promoting sound doctrine and godliness in the church *but* also the uphill task of confronting false teaching. And Paul knows from experience and revelation from the Holy Spirit that the relational dynamics are far more complex than just telling someone they are wrong, especially older believers.

In some cultures, I know in the culture I grew up in, it is assumed that the older men and women are wiser than others and they know it all. That’s not the case always. Some men in Ephesus supposedly older than Timothy were promoting false teaching. They were promoting myths, speculations, denying Christian liberty.

So Paul could have said to Timothy, Timothy, just tell these older men to stop. Just use your pastoral authority to size them up to shut them up. Does Paul do that? No. Paul knows that this is the household of God. Paul knows what is in line with godliness.

That is why Paul tells Timothy upfront. I know men older than can be wrong. But don’t berate them. He doesn’t say never correct them. Paul tells him to not rebuke them.

So, if Timothy is to correct them but not rebuke them, how is he to instruct others especially older men. Verse 1: Plead with them.

This is so different from what we see in this world. If you work for an employer and have a supervisor, the supervisor has the authority to tell you to stop if something is not according to the rules or even hand you over a letter of dismissal. You rarely see a supervisor pleading with you.

What Paul wants Timothy to know is that when Timothy behaves this way in the church, he is not only being an example of godliness but he is promoting respect for older men even when they are wrong.

Likewise, Paul tells Timothy to treat younger men as brothers.

How are older women to be treated? As mothers.

How about younger women? As sisters.

You see the church is symbolic of a home. Father, mother, brother and sister. The church is a distinctive group of people from different backgrounds, ethnicities and age groups now called the family of God. But Paul does not end there. Paul says the household of God is more than just any household. It is a *holy* household. It is a sanctified house. It is godly community. That is why Paul says treat other women in all purity.

This is not the first time Paul mentions purity. Paul wrote to Timothy in chapter 4 when he said, “*set an example in speech, in conduct, in faith, in love and in purity*”.

So that is the *first* instruction: How do relate to each other in the church. In respect with people who are older than you. If you are a man, relate to younger men in brotherly love. To younger women in all purity.

Now, if you children or teens are thinking “what about us?” Paul is going to about you as well. Let look at verses 3 and 4.

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.*

In these verse Paul primarily talks about widows but also about children.

Paul does write a good detail about widows in the next passage as well. But here Paul says “*honor widows who are truly widows*”. What does he mean?

First of all, the Bible has a lot to say about widows.

James tells us that “*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world*” James 1:27

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 68 that “*God is the father of the fatherless and protector of widows*”. God has a very special place in his heart for orphans and widows.

Jesus showed extraordinary compassion for widows during the days of his ministry on earth.

When a widow in the town of Nain lost her son, Jesus comforted this lady and raised the dead son to life (Luke 7: 11-15). Jesus tells the parable of a widow who persisted and received justice.

Jesus commended a widow who had given all that she had to the temple.

Jesus also said that those who exploit widows for their money will receive greater condemnation. (Mark 12:40). I am afraid there are many prosperity preachers today who take advantage of them. I know of a couple of widows who have had their money taken from them.

Now, when Paul says *honor* widows, he means that the church ought to care and give financial support to those widows who are truly destitute, to those who have otherwise no support from anywhere else. In the Old and New Testament times, the majority of their financial resources had come from the husband's income. The husband would care for the welfare of the family. The wife would care for the home and the children.

That is why Paul says, widows who are truly widows.

And how do we know who are truly widows?

Look at verse 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.*

Left all alone. A widow is who had no one else to depend to on *and* someone who continues to trust in God and spends her time in prayer. Such a lady a truly a widow. Those widows are worthy of honor and care.

In the Gospel of Luke, we see a great example of a godly widow, Anna. She lived as a widow for eighty four years and spent her time worshipping, fasting and praying. (Luke 2).

I don't know how many women have had their husbands abandon them and as mothers, they are left to fend for themselves.

Paul says we must honor, meaning we must care and support those who are truly needy.

But Paul also says there may be widows who have children or grand-children who are able to live independently and even support others.

So those widows need to be supported by their family first.

Look at verse 4. This is good instruction for children.

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.*

If a widow has children or grand-children, they must pitch in. The widow, before she had become a widow, was a mother of her children. And the mother took care of the children. Babies come helpless. So the mother fed the babies, the mother clothed them, the mother cared for them, the mother protected them. The mother did everything for them. But now the mother had become a widow. She needs the care. She needs the support. So what does Paul say about where the support ought to come from. From the children and or the grand-children. Its very interesting that Paul says that they must first show godliness to their own household. This is the fifth commandment for Christian households. *Honor your father and mother*. This is godliness for children to follow when they are young. Paul writes in

Ephesians chapter six verse one, “*Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right*”. You want to do *right*. Obey your parents.

So in verse 4, when Paul says “children or grand-children must first learn”. The word *learn* is derived from the word *disciple*. Discipleship begins at home. Godliness begins at home. And also in the same verse, Paul uses the word *parents*. This is simply the word those who were born before you – that includes parents or grandparents.

So if the mother fed the child, cared for the child and took care of the child, and the child had lost the father, its time for the grown up child when he or she has the ability to return the care to the mother.

And if you are wondering why?

Look at the last part of verse 4. For this is *pleasing* in the sight of God.

Godliness starts with your obedience at home.

To summarize what we saw, we as the household of God are to relate to each other in respect, in honor, in purity and in godliness. All of these things are pleasing in the sight of God.

Do you know who lived his whole life pleasing His Father? A life of complete surrender and obedience to His Father.

It was our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hear what sJesus said in John 8: “*I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.*”²⁹ *And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are **pleasing** to him.*” John 8:28-29

In closing let’s look at an exhortation from Paul:

¹⁰ *So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.* Galatians 6:10

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **An Appeal For Respect And Honor.** 1 Timothy 5:1-6

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. How is the household of God (the church) different and distinctive from every other institution or community in this world? 1 Timothy 3:16, Ephesians 2: 19-22.

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. Being then the household of God, how are we to relate to each other?
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: Do you sense an area where you need to grow in? Respect, giving honor, purity or godliness?