



Sunday School Lesson for January 29, 2006.

Released on January 27, 2006.

"Respect Others"

Printed Text: **1 Timothy 5:1-8, 17-25.**

Devotional Reading: **Matthew 23:23-28.**

Background Scripture: **1 Timothy 5.**

Time: A.D. 62

Place: Macedonia

1 Timothy 5:1-8, 17-25

1. Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren;

2. The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

3. Honor widows that are widows indeed.

4. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.

5. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

6. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

7. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

8. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

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17. Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.

18. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward.

19. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

20. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

21. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

22. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

23. Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

24. Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.

25. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to examine passages that dictate respectful relationships within God's family, the church.

Principle: to teach that our relationships within God's family are built on respect.

Application: to encourage Christians to relate to others with appropriate respect.

How to Say It

EUTHANASIA. you-thuh-*nay*-zhuh.

Introduction

Too Busy?

Some of us can recall depressing images of the old county homes where the aged and orphans were left-forgotten, lonely, and despondent. And even with our modern, upscale, and highly regulated senior citizen facilities, the sense of loneliness often is no less. After being placed in a comfortable setting, many of the elderly are abandoned and forgotten by family and friends.

Many fine benevolent facilities try to compensate for this state of affairs by providing a broad program of activities and services. This helps alleviate the tendency of residents to lapse into self-pity and depression. Even with emotional well-being, however, advancing years are accompanied by breakdowns in health. That's the very nature of our humanity (see Psalm 90:10). The problems of the aging process are heightened with the loss of close friends and the neglect of family members. Here is where the family and the church must come into the picture.

Today's lesson is timely for those who live in a materialistic, self-centered culture. Paul gives a sobering reminder of those godly traits that should be inherent in family relationships, especially among believers.

Lesson Background

Last week we studied Paul's counsel to Timothy with regard to false teachers, their doctrines, and the necessity of exposing them. The lesson concluded with admonitions to Timothy concerning those things to which he needed to give continual attention in his personal life. Paul now makes a transition and calls attention to meeting needs among certain members of the church.

God's solutions to meeting needs are not always the same as human solutions. For example, the courts have made it legal to eliminate unwanted pre-born children by way of abortion. In certain places and circumstances, the aged can be removed through a murderous process referred to as euthanasia. Some would eliminate all who, in their eyes, no longer contribute to society. But God created us in His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26, 27). Every person is to be regarded with dignity and respect at all stages and situations of life.

Behavior Toward Others (1 Timothy 5:1, 2)

1. Does "elder" in I Timothy 5:1 refer to an older man or to a leader of the church?

The word "elder" can mean a leader in the congregation or simply a person who is older.

In the first case, Paul probably is referring to an aged man as opposed to someone who holds the office of elder since there is an older/ younger contrast in both verses 1 and 2.

Youth are prone to be impatient with older men, who tend to be more deliberate in their actions. Of course, one does not tolerate indolence or incompetence. But the corrective approach should be that of encouraging industry and ability. The purpose is to build up, not to tear down. So the approach to those who are older is to be done with respect and

dignity that their years deserve. This is the import of the word *entreat* in contrast to the word *rebuke*.

Treating others in the congregation as family requires both love and commitment. Older men and women should be treated like parents, with honor and respect. Such respect should apply to heeding advice and also to showing courtesy. Younger men and women should be treated like brothers and sisters (see v. 2). Sibling relationships differ from mere acquaintanceships and casual friendships in the level of commitment. Casual friends may separate over disagreements, but brothers and sisters forgive and remain committed to a relationship. So should we in the church.

Honor, courtesy, and commitment are qualities that would improve any church. When the members take these commandments seriously, not only will the congregation thrive, but outsiders will also see our love and be attracted to Christ. Paul's command is practical, not theoretical, because every person can regard his fellow congregation members as family.

Care of Widows (1 Timothy 5:3-8)

2. What did Paul mean by "widows indeed" (vs. 3,4)?

In the culture of Paul's time, a woman without a husband or family is in dire straits. It can be a heartless environment for those who have no means of support. Government-funded social insurance plans, health care, and retirement centers do not exist. Paul's first instruction regarding the church's responsibility in this matter is that those who *are widows indeed* are to receive *honor*.

The type of widows that Paul has in mind are those who are destitute and have no family members to take care of them. The early church in Jerusalem set a good example of benevolence when it came to the care of widows (Acts 6:1-7). Attention to such widows is certainly "pure religion and undefiled before God" (James 1:27).

Widows with family capable of supporting them were in a different category. Although congregational relationships are to be like family, the financial responsibility for care of parents belonged first to the birth family. Immediate family and even nephews were responsible to pay for their aunt's care before the church was to take on the

responsibility.

Paul equated care for family members with "piety" (v. 4), or godliness. God considers it righteous when we care for aging parents and relatives. "To requite" means "to repay." It is a biblical principle that we should repay our parents for their care of us by caring for them in turn.

3. How did Paul further subdivide the widows (vs. 5,6)?

In verse 5 Paul describes a type of *widow* who is worthy of the church's help. Though without a visible means of support, she trusts God. She believes her prayers for her own needs (*supplications*) as well as her *prayers* on behalf of others will be honored. She is keenly aware of God's presence (compare Luke 2:36, 37). Through His church, God provides for members of His family who are in genuine need.

Paul described the unworthy widows as living in pleasure. He may have meant living in sexual relationships outside of marriage (see v. 9). Some women no doubt used their new freedom from marriage as an opportunity to sin. Paul described them as dead already, since they chose not to live a godly life.

4. On what basis did Paul command Timothy to charge others regarding relationships (vs. 7,8)?

The leaders of the congregation have a place of authority. Timothy was Paul's representative to the church leaders in Ephesus. Paul considered Timothy's authority to be such that he could command men and women in the church. Church leaders have a responsibility as well as a God-given authority to address relationships as well as doctrine.

Paul was concerned about families failing to provide financial support. He considered such people worse than infidels (nonbelievers), for even most unbelievers take care of their families financially. Paul expected that faith in Jesus Christ would strengthen families, not weaken them.

Jesus affirmed the obligation to support one's parents (Matthew 19:19). No one who is so cold as to ignore family can really claim to know Jesus and His love.

Honor for Elders (1 Timothy 5:17-20)

5. What is a ruling elder, and what was Paul's point in quoting the law of Moses (vs. 17,18)?

Paul now specifies the regard in which *elders that rule well* are to be held. Though a congregation has many elders in the sense of older men, it has only a few elders (or perhaps one) who rule. Paul did not mean "rule" in the sense of a dictator or tyrant but in the sense of one who administers and leads.

Ruling elders are worthy of double honor. The call for double honor may have had a military connotation. Some soldiers were paid double for being of such great value to the army (Keener, IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (InterVarsity)).

A few elders are able to *labor extensively in the word and doctrine*, and they do a great job. They may have retired from occupations or livelihoods in order to serve full time in visitation, teaching, and preaching. Paul justifies such compensation by citing two biblical illustrations, as we see in verse 18.

The first quote is from Deuteronomy 25:4. Paul also cites this same passage in 1 Corinthians 9:9 to justify his own right to receive support. Oxen are allowed to feed while they work. Thus they participate in the fruit of their labor.

The second citation is from Jesus. It concerns support for His disciples as they labor (Luke 10:7). Elders who rule well should be honored in this way.

6. Where did Paul get the principle of requiring multiple witnesses (vs. 19,20)?

Leaders will naturally experience resentment from some who do not agree with their decisions or who are disappointed with their relationship to the leader. The leader of a congregation needs to be protected against frivolous accusations. Thankfully, the law of Moses provides a system of justice that applies well to congregations. Any accusation

should be based on two or three witnesses (cf. Deut. 19:15). An accusation by one witness may easily be a false accusation, but that established by multiple witnesses is much more likely to be truthful.

Paul also said that elders found guilty should be publicly rebuked. Many churches have made the mistake of covering up the sins of a pastor. Such pastors are often able to move to other churches with no one knowing of their past abuses. Also, other pastors need to fear the judgment of the church. If a pastor sins gravely and is publicly rebuked, others will see and take even more seriously the need to be above reproach.

Notes to Timothy (1 Timothy 5:21-25)

7. Why is it so important for leaders of the church not to play favorites (v. 21)?

Administering justice is a serious matter. Of necessity it must be done impartially. *God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels* watch our actions. We will be held accountable. God does not like dishonest scales (see Leviticus 19:36; Proverbs 11:1; Micah 6:11). This especially applies to the scales of justice (compare Deuteronomy 1:17; 16:19; Proverbs 24:23).

Favoritism can destroy a church family the same as it can our earthly families (examples: Genesis 25:28; 37:3, 4). A leadership's judgments and actions are not to be based upon friendships, personality, position, or wealth, but on the basis of what is right and wrong.

8. What is important about going slow and being wise in ordaining a man (v. 22)?

Churches too often call leaders who have not been properly evaluated. Paul commanded Timothy to be slow in laying on hands. The ceremony of laying on hands for ordination involved physical touch in a public ceremony while praying to ordain a man in office.

When a church calls a leader who has not been properly evaluated and that leader turns out to be immoral or harmful, the church shares in the responsibility. Neglecting the duty of protecting the flock from harmful leaders is a sin. Not every wolf in sheep's clothing

can be screened out through evaluation, since some can hide their sins very well, but those who could easily be detected by observing their history, family, and character should be prevented from leading.

In searching for a pastor, deacon, or staff member, a church should appoint able members to research any candidate. The qualifications for eldership and the diaconate (cf. 1 Tim. 3) should be closely followed. Only when a man's family and ministry record as well as his doctrine have been examined should he be considered for office.

Timothy also is told not to participate in anyone's unworthy conduct. A leader is to be *pure* or circumspect in all behavior (1 Tim. 5:22b).

9. Why did Paul tell Timothy to "use a little wine" for his "stomach's sake" (v. 23)?

Timothy may have been abstaining from wine because of the influence of ascetic teachers (a life of self-discipline and self-denial) in his area. The same ascetics had been teaching abstinence from marriage and meat (cf. 4:3).

Wine was very important in that day since it was the primary beverage other than water. The common practice was to mix wine with water so that the wine was actually in less quantity than the water. This was practical since people did not want to become drunk merely to hydrate their bodies. The wine served to kill microorganisms in the water, though the people had no concept of microorganisms at the time. What they did know was that a little wine in their water was healthy for the stomach.

Timothy was probably suffering for his abstinence. His digestion may have been poor from a number of sources of contamination. Paul did not believe, as some do today, that medical and safety precautions could be ignored by people of faith. The most that can be assumed here is that Paul's recommendation is for medicinal purposes only (*thy stomach's sake*).

God uses natural means to keep us healthy and expects us to live wisely. He will not bless folly in the name of religion. Paul probably mentioned this issue here because it was connected to Timothy's relationships with leaders, some of whom were teaching wrong doctrine.

10. What important principle did Paul give in relating to and accurately appraising others (vs. 24,25)?

The *sins of some* are very obvious, aren't they? A flagrantly sinful lifestyle obviously disqualifies a person for consideration to be a church leader.

In others, the sins are not so obvious. They may even be cleverly concealed. A modern example would be surfing the Internet in private to lust after pornographic images. Yet the Scripture says, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). When Timothy refrains from laying on hands too soon to ordain elders (1 Timothy 5:22), he is allowing time for secret sins to surface.

The same principle is true for "the good works of some" (v. 25). Good works commend a person. Christian attitudes and conduct stand out. Even good deeds done in secret commend the person doing them; God will make sure of that (Matthew 6:3, 4). People respect integrity and credibility.

Conclusion

This lesson has been a primer on relationships within the church. In each relationship, respect has been the common denominator. We respect older people, people of the opposite sex, needy widows, and our church leaders.

The verses considered have provided much food for thought and much instruction for living. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20; compare Galatians 5:22, 23). Encourage your students to put these principles of respect into practice in their everyday lives.

Thought to Remember

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

Prayer

Father, we thank You for godly men who are willing to answer the high calling of eldership in Your church. Bless them and grant them the wisdom and insight that will enable them to administer the affairs of the church with justice and mercy. In Jesus' name we ask it, amen.

Anticipating Next Week's Lesson

Next week's lesson challenges us to be true to our Christian heritage. Study 2 Timothy 1:1-18.

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