

Gordon Fee in his commentary suggests that the inordinate number of verses given to this topic of younger widows may be because they are to be associated at Ephesus with the “weak-willed women” in 2 Timothy 3:6-7 and have a relationship with the false teachers the apostle is seeking to rebuke. Two perpetual principles emerge:

- Care should be provided in the church for those who are clearly most vulnerable
- Families should provide for their family members, with special regard to the 5th Commandment (Ex. 20:12)

Note that Paul is still concerned that the behaviour of the communities of faith should at least be seen to match the best of the wider community, if not, exceed it, so that the Gospel’s reputation is not tarnished, but attracts new converts (see vs.7; 2:1-4).

Q.8 RE-READ vss. 4, 8, 16. Does the old adage “Charity begins at home” have any truth in it? What should be the responsibilities of families towards their own within the church “family” for pastoral care? What responsibilities should the church leadership have towards them?

Q.9 What contemporary challenges arise in these instructions for modern Western societies in relation to caring for family members in a way that honours the Scriptures demands?

Q.10 What can you identify in this passage in either attitudes, behaviours or deeds that give glory to God?

[the section on elder/leaders from vss. 17-25 will be addressed in the next study]

6:1-2 New Relationships in the light of the Gospel

Slavery in Timothy’s time was very different to recent American or African examples. Rather than racial motivations, economic necessity– offering security to the poor and service to society. Nevertheless, it was at the bottom rung of societal status. Slaves must have made up a significant portion of converts in New Testament times (e.g. Col. 3:22-25; Eph. 6:5-8; 1 Pet. 2:18-25; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 7:21-24; Philem. 10-17). Pastoral care was no doubt tricky given that a converted slave may actually worship with his/her converted master in the same church! Note Paul’s dual concern again: healthy relationships & the reputation of the Gospel in the community (see 2:2; 3:7; 5:14).

Were slaves in their new found “freedom” showing disdain publicly to their masters? Were they, like some of the women at Ephesus, inappropriately taking aggressive authority over others at the encouragement of the false teachers? We do not know. Paul indicates that they should not see equal footing with Christ as an opportunity to look down on others as a reversal of one’s past. The new order of relationships must be worked out sensitively. Three lasting principles emerge: Christian behaviour should be governed by:

1. A concern that God’s name will not be dishonoured by our behaviour or teaching; and,
2. A recognition that, as Christians, we are to consider each other as brothers and sisters (family)
3. Our behaviour and message are a means of others becoming Christians



the first letter to timothy



Small Group Notes

Lessons on Life in the Church #6 How to treat other people

1 Tim 5:7

Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame.

Study No.6

READ 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2

Warm Up Exercise

Q.1 What rules did your parents teach you about how to treat other people? List as many as you can remember...

Q.2 Which “rules” in your list above are generally practiced by other people in your community? Which are sadly lacking?

Q.3 What distinctively Christian guidelines can you think of that relate to how we should treat others?



Recap

The Apostle Paul finished chapter 4 on a principle that still stands especially for all who consider themselves leaders in the church: “watch your life and doctrine closely and persevere in them.” Timothy is not only to be concerned with what he believes, but how his example is maintained among people. The key themes in the letter of “sound doctrine” vs. false teaching is in view. So is the matter of living out that belief in the public eye and maintaining a standard of behaviour that at least matches the best of society, but preferably exceeds it.



Study the Text– 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2

The apostle now turns from concerns for Timothy to advise about his pastoral care among the flock in the churches at Ephesus. He begins by addressing Timothy’s responsibility towards other believers (5:1-2); and then opens up a topic that may well have been a major motivation for writing the letter: the behaviour of younger widows and erring elders in the Christian community (5:3-25). Finally he addresses pastoral care for another important sector of society represented in those Ephesian congregations, masters and their slaves (6:1-2). How should we treat other people in the church?



5:1-2 Show appropriate respect

Though he uses the word *presbyteros* he means not a leading elder of the church in this case, but any older man. Given that Paul charged Timothy with the task of dealing with all sorts of problems, particularly false teaching, Timothy, a relatively young man (1 Tim 4:12), would no doubt have had to speak with authority to people of all sorts; words of encouragement, exhortation and rebuke (2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:15). Note the specifics of Paul’s guidelines for showing such respect in our passage:

Person	Timothy’s required behaviour
Older man	Exhort as _____ 1 Tim. 5:1; Lev. 19:32; 1 Peter 5:5; Titus 2:2
Younger man	Exhort as _____ 1 Tim. 5:1; Philemon 1:15-16
Older woman	Exhort as _____ 1 Tim. 5:2; Titus 2:3; Rom. 16:13
Younger woman	Exhort as _____ 1 Tim. 5:2; Titus 2:4,5; 2 Tim. 3:6-7; 1 Tim. 5:11

1 Peter 1 2:17 says: *Show proper respect to everyone: Love the fellowship of believers, fear God, honor the king.*

Note in our passage that there is an assumption that church fellowship shall have the likeness of a healthy family (as “father/mother/sister/brother”). There also seems to be a recognition of a generation gap that demands some consideration. In the light of this?

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Q.4 What characteristics of a healthy family might be seen in a healthy church?

Q.5 How do you normally address a person who is older? Younger? Have you observed how this is done in cultures other than your own? Give examples:

Q.6 How could older people be respectfully helped to recognise and change their bad behaviour or wrong thinking by (younger) people in the church?

Q.7 What sort of sexual protocols should be observed, especially by leaders, when carrying out pastoral care in the church?

5:3-16 Those most vulnerable

At Ephesus, a particular concern for certain young widows raises principles in Paul’s teaching that we can apply to other pastoral situations today. Some commentators believe vss. 9 & 10 points to a special “order” of widows in those days, and sometimes look for structures and rules for today. However, Paul’s concern seems to be discerning which are the widows in “real” need (vss. 3-4,8) and therefore ensuring that they receive pastoral care (see vs. 11).

Contrast the descriptions of the “real widow” and the “young widows” in this passage:

Person	Descriptions
“real widow” Vss. 5-7 & 9-10	
Younger widows Vss. 11-15	