

Title: Godly living within the Church Family & caring for those in need.

Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort *him* as a father, younger men as brothers, ² older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.

³ Honor widows who are really widows. 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. ⁵ Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. ⁶ But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. ⁷ And these things command, that they may be blameless. ⁸ 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.

⁹ 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, ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ But refuse *the* younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, ¹² having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Therefore I desire that *the* younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. ¹⁵ For some have already turned aside after Satan. ¹⁶ 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.

Introduction

The central section of Paul's letter to Timothy closed last week.

Although Paul continues to instruct Timothy, the teaching focuses on the Church family.

The reputation of the Church family is the focus of this section.

This is especially noted in chapter 5: v. 7,8,14.

The main message in this passage is that the Church family is to behave with discernment and compassion and to care for those who are in real need.

There are three important questions that we need to answer from this passage.

These are 1. How important is it as Christians to be involved in caring for elderly parents?

2. To what extent is godly living observed in the home, and the Church?

3. How important is it for the Church to act with discernment as well as compassion in situations of need?

The passage we study today **should answer these questions.**

I will divide our passage into two sections.

The first will be Chapter 5: v. 1-2.

This is a challenge for the Church members to relate to each other like a family.

The second section which is Chapter 5: v. 3-16 will concentrate on how the Church family must care for its members in need.

1. The Church members must relate to each other like a family - 5: v. 1-2.

To understand v. 1-2, we need to go back to the teaching of Jesus in Mark Chapter 3: v. 31-35.

(in the N.K.J.)

³¹ Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. ³² And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You."

³³ But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?"³⁴ And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."

So Jesus clearly tells us that anybody who does God's will, is His Mother, Brother and Sister.

Also there are verses in the New Testament that highlight the metaphor of the Church as a family.

Ephesians 2: v. 19 in the N.L.T

¹⁹ So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

Galatians 6: v. 10. in the N.L.T.

¹⁰ Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

The word "family" speaks to us of intimacy, care, openness, and love.

Paul is developing this teaching a little further to indicate that members in a Church are to behave **like a family** towards each other in their relationships.

In other words, Paul is saying that Christians in a Church fellowship should treat each other in the **same special way** that they treat their personal family.

Timothy was in a spiritual family in Ephesus.

They had had problems with false teachers.

This had upset the Church family and it brought divisions and problems in people's relationships.

It is quite likely that the reason for Paul's challenge here in these verses concerning relations, is that there had been problems relating to relationships.

The word that is translated in English as "**rebuke**" in v.1 is a very strong word in the original Greek Language.

It means harsh or violent rebuke.

This is the only time that the word appears in the New Testament.

This word is related to the treatment of the whole Church family.

In other words, **we must not confront each other in a harsh or violent way.**

Even when false teaching appears, or disobedience to God's word is clear, we must **challenge and confront people with sensitivity and care.**

It is not wrong to challenge false teaching, nor is it wrong to confront people who are clearly disobedient to God's word.

However, it is "**HOW**" we do it that Paul is instructing Timothy.

It is never easy for a young person to challenge an older man, especially in Japanese culture.

However, we have an example of how to do this from the life of a young man called **Daniel.**

Daniel Chapter 4: v. 27.in the N.K.J.

²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by *being* righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."

Daniel showed great respect but he did not compromise the challenge to the King.

Paul then moves from the treatment of older men to the treatment of younger men.

Younger men should be treated like brothers.

It appears that Paul is talking here about younger people of a similar generation.

We might regard this today as people between the ages of 20-40 years.

If you view somebody as your brother in real terms, then there will be **no idea of any superior attitude.**

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were forbidden to hate their brothers.

(Lev. 19: v.17 in N.K.J.)

¹⁷ 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

This kind of love and humility was given by Joseph towards his brothers, despite their evil treatment towards him.

(Gen. 50:15 – 21 in N.K.J.)

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him." ¹⁶ So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, ¹⁷ 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you." ' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

¹⁸ Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we *are* your servants."

¹⁹ Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? ²⁰ But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. ²¹ Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Peter instructed believers to "**Love the brotherhood**" in 1 Peter 2: v.17.

This love should not stop us challenging people about sin.

Jesus instructs us to challenge our brother if he sins.

Matthew 18: v. 15. (N.K.J.)

¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

Luke 17: v. 3. (N.K.J.)

³ Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

What we need to realise is that not everybody is going to accept or receive our challenge to their lives.

Even if you confront people in love, it is never easy for you to challenge people.

2 Thessalonians 3: v. 14-15 tells us what to do in these circumstances.

(2 Thess. 3: v. 14-15 in the N.K.J.)

¹⁴ And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

Now in this section Paul instructs women on how to confront other women.

Older women are to be treated like Mothers.

The Bible commands respect for Mothers. **Exodus 20: v. 12 says "Honour your Father and your Mother... with the promise of blessing if you do obey this command.**

Proverbs 1: v.8 tells us **not to neglect your Mother's instruction. (N.L.T.)**

Paul gives us an example on how to treat older women who needed correction.

Philippians 4: v. 1-3 in the N.L.T.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work.

² Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. ³ And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

Even though there was a disagreement between these two older women, Paul still commended them for their service in the Lord.

Finally, Paul concludes this section with younger women.

Paul says that younger women should be treated as sisters, with all purity.

This is a very important instruction for all of our young people here at O.I.C.

Sexual purity is a great challenge, especially when the situation involves young women.

By commanding Timothy to treat younger women as sisters, **he is trying to protect any lust or any inappropriate behaviour with his relationship towards any younger women.**

Of course younger women must be confronted with their sin and if at all possible, it should be done by another female.

However, if this is not the case, and a woman is not able to do this, then a man must take another female with her, especially in the case of a Pastor who visits a woman.

2. **How should the Church Family treat widows who have practical needs?** **(Chapter 5: v. 3-16)**

There is a lot of wisdom in these verses which obviously apply to widows in this context.

However, there are **transferable principles** which could apply to financial support in general for Church members in need.

These principles are important for Pastors and Church leaders to help them in their decision making. Paul gives clear instruction about how to identify the real widows who should be supported by the Church, and also to give advice to younger widows.

a) **Widows should be supported by their own families first. – v. 4.**

Paul points out that Christian children and Christian grandchildren have a responsibility to support their widowed Mother or Grandmother.

The Church **should not provide financial care** when the widow has Christian family who can support them.

In v. 8 Paul gives a serious charge to those who don't make provision for their widowed parents or grandparents.

(v. 8 in the N.K.J.)

⁸ 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.

b) **True Widows who deserve support should be checked out fully according to several principles. v. 5, 9, 10.**

Widows had to be over 60 years old in order to receive support.

Widows had to be the wife of one man. This does not relate to marital status. The Greek text literally reads, "a-one -man woman".

This has a parallel to chapter 3: v.2 and v.12.

Paul actually commands younger widows to re-marry in v. 14.

So therefore a one-man woman is a woman who was faithful to her husband and lived a pure marriage. She would have been a **role model for marriage**.

A true widow worthy of support had to have a **reputation for good works**.

These good works would refer to ministry within the Church.

(Ephesians 2: v. 10 – N.K.J.)

¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Some of these good works are mentioned in the text.

These are **providing hospitality to strangers**.

She had to have **washed the feet of believers**. This refers to the most-humble of jobs that was normally done by servants.

In those days, people had open sandals and got very dusty and dirty feet.

When people arrived as a guest in a home, the first thing that happened was that they had their feet washed. Although this was done by servants in a very large household, in the case of a small home the wife would need to perform this duty.

These widows also would have helped people in need.

The word used in the N.K.J. is "**relieved the afflicted.**"

In the Greek it is translated “**those people under stress or pressure**”.

Today this would be **people hurting mentally, or physically, or people in hospitals or institutions.**

Finally, Paul sums up by saying that these widows must have **diligently followed every good work.**

The Greek word says “**devoted herself**”.

So Paul gives us a very detailed and clear account of the widows who deserve to be supported by the Church.

3. Paul’s advice to younger widows in the Church. – v. 11-15.

In v. 14 Paul advises that younger widows should re-marry and have children if possible.

This action will protect their spiritual lives and stop them being a prey to Satan.

Some younger widows had already departed from the faith and ended up as gossips and busy-bodies.

You might find it difficult to understand why Paul is strongly suggesting re-marriage for the younger widows.

After all some widows would be very devoted and not fall prey to Satan.

They might be very faithful widows.

Let me explain **why Paul says this.**

Turn with me to v. 11-12 and we will read it in the N.L.T.

¹¹ The younger widows should not be on the list, because their physical desires will overpower their devotion to Christ and they will want to remarry. ¹² Then they would be guilty of breaking their previous pledge.

We also need to go back and read Number 30: v. 1-16 in the N.L.T.

Then Moses summoned the leaders of the tribes of Israel and told them, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ² A man who makes a vow to the LORD or makes a pledge under oath must never break it. He must do exactly what he said he would do.

³ “If a young woman makes a vow to the LORD or a pledge under oath while she is still living at her father’s home, ⁴ and her father hears of the vow or pledge and does not object to it, then all her vows and pledges will stand. ⁵ But if her father refuses to let her fulfill the vow or pledge on the day he hears of it, then all her vows and pledges will become invalid. The LORD will forgive her because her father would not let her fulfill them.

⁶ “Now suppose a young woman makes a vow or binds herself with an impulsive pledge and later marries. ⁷ If her husband learns of her vow or pledge and does not object on the day he hears of it, her vows and pledges will stand. ⁸ But if her husband refuses to accept her vow or impulsive pledge on the day he hears of it, he nullifies her commitments, and the LORD will forgive her. ⁹ If, however, a woman is a widow or is divorced, she must fulfill all her vows and pledges.

¹⁰ “But suppose a woman is married and living in her husband’s home when she makes a vow or binds herself with a pledge. ¹¹ If her husband hears of it and does not object to it, her vow or pledge will stand. ¹² But if her husband refuses to accept it on the day he hears of it, her vow or pledge will be nullified, and the LORD will forgive her. ¹³ So her husband may either confirm or nullify any vows or pledges she makes to deny herself. ¹⁴ But if he does not object on the day he hears of it, then he is agreeing to all her vows and pledges. ¹⁵ If he waits more than a day and then tries to nullify a vow or pledge, he will be punished for her guilt.”

¹⁶ These are the regulations the LORD gave Moses concerning relationships between a man and his wife, and between a father and a young daughter who still lives at home.

What Paul is concerned about here is that young widows should devote themselves to serving the Lord and make a vow after their husband had died.

Although this would be commendable, the vow might be made in haste, or not fully considered.

Then she might meet a man who she has a desire for and her **passions would overrule her previous vow.**

This would put the young widow in a very difficult position and she would be **a bad witness for herself and the faith community.**

So Paul's strong advice would have been **very good in the context of their situation.**

Paul's concluding remarks – v. 16

Paul sums up his position by repeating that it is the responsibility of believers to support their own widows, parents or grandparents.

If the members obeyed the teaching here, then the Church could have the resources to support the widows who really do need their support.

Practical applications and Transferrable principals from these two passages.

1. The way that we treat one another within the O.I.C. family is very important.

There needs to be a **respect for the older members**, both male and female.

This should be done in the same way that we should respect the older members of our own family.

However, if these older people should disobey God's clear teaching and sin, then we **must not compromise by not challenging them.**

Nevertheless, our challenge should be done in love and dignity.

2. Giving regular money to Widows and other people within a Church family should be regulated with great discernment, using Biblical principles.

Many years ago in the U.K. before government money was available for the unemployed and very poor people, there were strict rules set out on who was entitled to receive support within the Church family. The same care and discernment needs to be applied today, even though our circumstances are a little different.

The big transferrable principle is that Christians should provide for their own family as a witness to the world. Paul uses strong words about Christians who don't do this. (**Quote 1 Timothy chapter 5: v. 8 in the N.K.J.**)

⁸ 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.

Somebody once said that you tell what a country is like by the way they treat their elderly and vulnerable citizens.

May God help us to be a good witness for Him by the way we treat each other and by the support that we give people, who really do need our support.