

## 9. Learning to Show Respect to Those Who Are Older

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children continue to grow spiritually so that their lives and ministry will have a greater and greater impact. That will happen as they see that we are continuing to grow spiritually in our own lives. We also saw that we want to help our children grow in their ministry as they learn to share the Word of God more and more effectively. In our topic today, we will see that we want to help our children learn how to show respect and help others learn to show respect to those who are older. Of course, that must also be modeled by example.

In 1 Timothy 5:1-2, we read, “Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort *him* as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger as sisters, with all purity.” Timothy was dealing with certain problem situations in the church at Ephesus. As a result, Paul gave him instructions about how to talk to the people that were involved in those situations. Since Timothy was fairly young, he would be talking to people who were older than he was in some cases. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Timothy had worked with Paul long enough to know that the goal is always to restore when sin is involved. This was always to be done with a spirit of gentleness.

In dealing with a situation involving an older man, Timothy was not to rebuke. The word that is translated “rebuke” means *to speak with harsh words*. The word that is translated “to exhort” means *to come to one’s side to strengthen or to encourage*. Paul demonstrated this attitude when he wrote to Philemon in Philemon 1:8-9 and said, “Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, *yet* for love’s sake I rather appeal *to you*—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—.” The proper attitude when dealing with sin or problems will cause people to be much more open to the correction of the Lord. We also want to help our children learn to treat older people with respect.

We see that same respect was to be shown with all people. If Timothy was dealing with a younger man, Timothy was to treat him like a brother because he is a brother in Christ. The word that is translated “younger” for both men and women refers to those who are new or younger. When Ananias died we read in Acts 5:6, “And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*.” Here, we see that the word refers to men who are young adults. Older women were to be treated as mothers. Timothy was to treat the younger men as brothers and the younger women as sisters. This was to be done with all purity. This word refers to purity in all areas of life but especially moral purity.

After mentioning the older women, Paul went on to mention those women who had become widows. 1 Timothy 5:3-4 says, “Honor widows who are really widows. 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.” The word translated “honor” means *to place a high value on someone*. Ephesians 6:2-3 says, “‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’”

Care and respect are to be shown to all widows but especially those who are widows without any family such as widows who have no children or grandchildren.

If a widow had children or grandchildren, then those children or grandchildren were to be shown how to show respect toward their mother or grandmother. Part of that respect is learning to provide food and other basic needs. This is one way that children or grandchildren can repay their mother for bringing them into the world and raising them to physical maturity. It is also a way to show the love and concern that was shown to them as they grew up as children. The only other place this word for parents is used is in 2 Timothy 1:3 where the word is translated “forefathers”. “I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as *my* forefathers *did*, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day.” Since this verse mentions that this is a way to repay parents, this means that the same instructions would apply to those who have fathers, grandfathers or great-grandparents who are no longer able to provide for their basic needs.

However, some widows or other elderly forefathers may not have any descendants to provide for their basic needs. Basic needs may vary in different cultures. In such cases, we see that the church is to view this as an opportunity for ministry. The phrase “this is good and acceptable” is used twice in the New Testament. The other use is in 1 Timothy 2:3 where we read, “For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.” The previous verses encourage us to pray for all people and especially for those who are in leadership. Here, we see that just as we are to pray for all people and for our leaders we are also to minister to the elderly in the church who have no one to care for them. This is part of our ministry of showing respect for those who are older.

We go on to read in 1 Timothy 5:5-6, “Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.” Here, we see that these verses go on to talk about widows and other elderly Christians who have no family to support them and provide for their needs. Such individuals are often left alone and forgotten by the world. These individuals show their faith in the Lord by the fact that they wait for the Lord to provide for their needs with confidence in the Lord. When they have a need, they bring their requests to the Lord. At the same time, they continue to pray to the Lord for others. In fact, many elderly Christians devote their time to prayer to the Lord for others. As one elderly widow said to me, “By the time I get done praying for all the people I know and their needs, it is already evening.”

In contrast, some widows focus on their own desires instead of praying for the needs of others. The word that is translated “pleasure” means *those who live in luxury seeking only to please self*. This word is used only one other time in the New Testament and that is in James 5:5 where we read, “You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.” Here, we see that those who live only to please self are individuals who have never placed their faith in Christ because the only thing to which they can look forward is the day of slaughter or destruction. We see that such a widow or other elderly person is spiritually dead even though that person may have physical life. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” An elderly individual who is spiritually dead certainly needs concerned Christians who will share with that individual how to have spiritual life.

In 1 Timothy 5:7-8, we read, “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.” Here, we see that Paul told Timothy to explain to those who were younger that the Lord gave this as a command to help those who are younger know how to show love to those who are older. In John 13:34-35, Christ told the disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Christ repeated that command and explained the greatness of His love when He said later that evening in John 15:12-14, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” Here, we see that Christ said that He showed His love for us by laying down His life for us by dying on the cross. Then He said that we show we are His friends by obeying what He commands us to do. In this verse in 1 Timothy, we see that we are commanded to minister to the needs of those who are truly widows.

Some of the Christians in Ephesus were not even taking care of the widows that were a part of their own household. Paul explained to Timothy what to tell such individuals. Paul said that such individuals had denied the faith. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Those who were neglecting widows that were a part of their own household were using their liberty as an opportunity to be selfish and neglect the widows in their family. That is not liberty. Instead, that is sin. We are given the liberty or freedom to serve one another in love.

Since some of the Christians were misusing their liberty and committing sin instead, Paul said that such individuals had denied the faith by their actions. The word that is translated “denied” means *to act entirely different than a person normally does*. This word is used in John 18:25 and 18:27. John 18:27 says, “Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed.” Peter was bold when he was standing next to the Lord a few hours earlier but he denied Christ three times when he was depending on his own strength. This verse says that a Christian that does not meet the needs of his household is worse than a person that is not a Christian. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to show respect and love for all older Christians and especially for older Christians from their own family. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” We want to show our children by our example how to show respect to family members and to all Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to show respect to those who are older.