

I Timothy 5:1-16

Commentary: Treatment of Church Members 5:1-2

In the previous chapter Paul gave Timothy instructions regarding his own conduct as a minister of the Gospel, now, Paul turns to the subject of how Timothy should minister to others within the Ephesian church. Timothy faced the challenge of pastoring a variety of different groups within the church. Each group had a unique set of needs which required a unique pastoral approach and sensitivity. Paul instructs Timothy on basic principles for effective pastoral care to older men, older women, younger men and younger women. In short, Timothy was to relate to everyone in the church as if they were the members of his own family (refer 3:15).

Comprehension Questions:

Carefully read through I Timothy 5:1-16 and then attempt to answer the questions which follow.

Timothy is instructed to treat each group of people within the church a certain way (v1-2).

- 1) What should Timothy avoid doing when dealing with each group (v1)?

- 2) How should Timothy engage with each group (v1-2)?

- 3) What word would you use to describe the correct relationship each individual has with one another in the Church? Hint: 3:15 contains a clue.

Commentary: Instructions Concerning Widows 5:3-16

After broadly addressing how Timothy was to relate to each group of people within the church, Paul now specifically addresses how Timothy was to deal with two main problem areas: the care of widows and the responsibility of Elders. In this section (v3-16) Paul focuses on instructions concerning the church's responsibility for its widows, in order to clarify how and for whom the church should provide special care. Widows have been, and still are, especially vulnerable individuals within society. As such, God has always shown special concern for their protection (refer Deut 10:18, 24:17, Ps 68:5, Isa 1:17 and Luke 2:37).

The needs of widows presented a challenge for the early church. At the time, wives rarely inherited anything when their husband died, and many had to rely on others for survival.

- 4) Where does the primary responsibility for caring for widows lie (v4)?

5) What is the biblical basis for the above response? Hint: the answer can be found in Exodus 20.

6) How should the local church treat the “widows indeed” (the ones without family support) (v3)?

Most people in Paul’s day recognised their obligation to care for their loved ones by providing for the widows in their own household.

7) Why is it of utmost importance for believers to provide for their own (v8)?

In Roman society, women under the age of sixty were considered capable of remarrying and working.

8) Why does Paul set an age limit (v9) for widows receiving support from the local church?

9) Apart from the age limit, what are the other requirements a “widow indeed” must meet in order to receive church support (v9-10)?

Apparently, some of the younger widows in Ephesus who were fully supported by the church were being “idle” and had fallen into gossiping and stirring up trouble.

10) What did Paul want them (and all young women) to do instead (v14)?

11) How would the above response benefit those “widows indeed” in the church (v16)?

12) What is the responsibility of Haddon Church of Christ to its own “widows indeed” and other vulnerable members?