

# 1 Timothy – The Household of God

*This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare (1 Timothy 1:18 ESV)*

*I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, <sup>15</sup> if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:14-15 ESV)*

## **Family Matters**

**February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**1 Timothy 5:1-2**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning! Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 5.

As you've likely already heard, Elon Musk made headlines this week when he spent \$44 billion to purchase Twitter. The social media market is thriving in our day and age. Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram – we communicate more than ever before!

However, while the *quantity* of our communication has never been higher, the *quality* of our communication has arguably never been lower. We have rendered ourselves incapable of having important conversations, because important conversations require more than the 280-character limitation of the tweet. More than that – important conversations require thoughtful listening, and eye contact, and respect, and all the other relics of days gone by.

And this isn't just a "kids these days" problem or a "those guys out there" problem. Two weeks ago, I had the privilege of attending Together For The Gospel in Louisville Kentucky. I sat with nearly 10,000 pastors and listened as the word of God was heralded by some of the most gifted preachers on the planet. In a panel discussion John Piper made the piercing comment that, as he looked out during his sermon earlier in the day, a large portion of the congregation of PASTORS were locked onto their phones scrolling through Twitter. Pastors, by the way, who had spent hundreds of dollars and driven hundreds of miles to attend the conference!

I say all of that to make this point: There has never been a generation more connected than ours. And, simultaneously, there has never been a generation more *disconnected* either. We talk AT people all day long, but we are forgetting how to talk TO one another. We relate with *everyone* and yet we rarely do the hard work of fostering deep, authentic relationships with *anyone*.

That's a problem.

Relationships matter. And in our passage this morning, Paul is laying out some principles for fostering healthy relationships in the household of God.

Paul has just finished explaining to Timothy that he needs to set an example for the congregation in his speech and in his conduct and that, above all else, he needs to preach the Word. But because Timothy's not preaching in a vacuum – because he's preaching to PEOPLE – he needs to give some thought to his relationships in the church. He is to minister to young people, old people, men and women. Paul is reminding Timothy: *How* you say what you say matters. If he's not thoughtful and intentional in the way that he relates to his congregation, nobody will bother listening to him! And, subsequently, nobody will change.

Similarly, if *you* want to be able to speak change into your family – if you want to be used by the Lord to influence your neighbourhood, and your workplace, and your circle of friends – then this lesson applies to you as well. We're going to be reading 1 Timothy 5:1-2. Hear now God's holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today.

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, <sup>2</sup>older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. (1 Timothy 5:1-2 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Before we get into the specific instructions of this passage, I want to spend some time unpacking the overarching relationship structure that Paul is assuming here. He's using "family language" because Paul understands that the church is a family.

If we think of the church as a country club, or a meeting place, or even as a circle of friends, then this familial language will always feel foreign and forced. More than that, if we don't recover the reality that the church – the household of God – *is* a family, then our gospel witness in this city will be compromised. The family language that Paul is using here is not simply for illustration – it is indicative of the deep, genuine relationships that we are meant to have with one another. The church IS a family. So, let's think a bit about that before we go any further.

## The Church Is A Family

Paul introduced this same idea back in chapter 3. If you flip back a page in your Bible, you'll see that in verses 14-15. Look there with me:

<sup>14</sup> I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, <sup>15</sup> if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in **the household of God** (1 Timothy 3:14-15a ESV)

This household/family imagery is not novel to Paul. He is walking in step with Jesus who uses this same language in Mark 3. There, we read:

<sup>31</sup> And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. <sup>32</sup> And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." <sup>33</sup> And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" <sup>34</sup> And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> **For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.**" (Mark 3:31-35 ESV)

In this passage, Jesus teaches us that there is a family line that runs deeper than blood.

Some of you have never experienced that. Perhaps you've been standing at a distance – keeping people at arm's length. Perhaps you've built walls around your personal life. Or perhaps you've tried to engage but your Christian brothers and sisters have never let you in. Can I encourage you this morning? Lean in again. As someone who has experienced a taste of the church as it was intended – as the family of God – I want you to know that there is nothing like it! It is worth fighting for!

I love my biological family – make no mistake. I love my brothers, and my cousins, and my aunts and uncles. But there are people in this room who know me better than my extended family ever will. Because we share a bond that runs deeper than our blood, don't we?

We are bound together by *his* blood. And *this* relationship that we share will stretch beyond our earthly lives and into eternity.

I mentioned that our gospel witness in this city will be hindered if we don't see this, and now I want to show you why I would say something like that. Why is it so important that we come to believe this and to live this out? In Mark 10, Jesus promised:

“Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, <sup>30</sup> who will not receive a **hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands**, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30 ESV)

You've heard me say this before, but it's so important that I'm going to say it again and again. In this passage, Jesus makes promises to those who have lost their families to follow him. He promised them eternal life in the age to come, and he's going to keep that promise! But he also promises them that they will receive a hundredfold NOW in THIS time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and land!

Where are these houses? Where are these children? Where are these brothers and sisters and mothers? They're all represented right here in this room! Jesus is making a promise in this passage and he's writing OUR NAMES ON THE CHEQUE!

He's saying: “I know that you lost your job, your family, and your circle of friends when you followed me, but I PROMISE YOU that the church will be for you everything that you lost AND MORE! They will invite you into their homes! They will break bread with you! They will be more than friends – they will be family! They will be the ones that you can call when you're in crisis. They will show you a love that you have never experienced before.

I. PROMISE.”

Our King is no liar; therefore, we must get this right. Our gospel witness is at stake!

“Well, what would this look like Pastor?” Here’s an easy idea: What if you picked one night of the week – every week – and you opened up your house for whoever wanted to come? What if you made a big pot of soup and spread the word that every Wednesday night your door was open? What if ten of us did that? What if every night of the week, there was at least one home in our church that was open for food, and family, and support?

Imagine a new believer. She has three kids with three different men, and her family is not in the picture. She doesn’t have many friends, and she’s been struggling through life on her own for as long as she can remember. But then she gets saved. And that same day, she gets invited to dinner, and they offer to pick her up. At dinner, she meets five other Christians, and they tell her about the Monday night dinner, and the Tuesday night dinner, and she realizes that there is a door that is open for her every single night of the week – people who WANT her company. She has family! A hundredfold! Just like Jesus said she would!

Do you hear how EASY that would be? We could so easily – with a tiny adjustment of our weekly calendar – fulfill the promise that Jesus made on our behalf.

What often happens instead is we enroll our family in every program under the sun, and we don’t gather with the church for the midweek program, and we miss two Sundays a month, and we never learn that girl’s name, and she never gets invited into a home, and she gives up on the church after six weeks of silently slipping in and out because we were all too busy to do the easiest thing in the world – to slow down and be available.

For the sake of the gospel, and for the salvation of the lost, and for the eternal good of your soul and the souls of your children I am pleading with you to go home and to look closely at your schedule. What does it say about your priorities? How much money do you need? What do your kids really need? Who are you trying to impress? Is there anything on that calendar that has eternal value?

We all assume that the devil's going to try and take our children down with pornography and drugs. I don't think so. I am increasingly convinced that he's going to try to take our kids down with side hustles, overtime and little league.

We need each other. We're a family. If we don't see that, we won't understand the heart behind the instructions in our passage this morning. Our identity as the family of God must shape the way that we interact with one another. This passage, then, deals with family matters in the household of God.

## Family Matters In The Household Of God

In these two verses Paul is helping Timothy to understand how he should relate with people in the household of God. First, Paul wants Timothy to understand that:

### 1. Age matters

Now, this is interesting, because in our passage from last Sunday Paul told Timothy:

Let no one despise you for your youth (1 Timothy 4:12 ESV)

We could easily overemphasize that verse and declare, "See! In God's family, age is just a number! Whether you are young or old, there is now no difference if you are in Christ!"

But is that what Paul was saying? Was he suggesting that age differences are supposed to be irrelevant in the household of God? Look again at our passage for this morning:

Do not rebuke an **older** man but encourage him as you would a father, **younger** men as brothers, <sup>2</sup> **older** women as mothers, **younger** women as sisters, in all purity. (1 Timothy 5:1-2 ESV)

In these verses, Paul is teaching Timothy that older men deserve to be treated differently than young men and that older women deserve to be treated differently than young women. You should speak to the older men in this church in the same way that you would to your father, and to the older women as you would your mother.

Because there IS a respect that should accompany age. That’s biblical. In Proverbs 20:29 Solomon writes:

The glory of young men is their strength,  
but the splendor of old men is their gray hair. (Proverbs 20:29 ESV)

Those gray hairs are splendor because those gray hairs were *earned*! He has those gray hairs because he has lived through 65 years of providing for his family, serving his church, and striving to live a life of obedience. She has those gray hairs because she knows what it is to bury her loved ones, and to observe the fruit or the lack-there-of in her children and then her grandchildren. You can’t find wisdom like that with a google search. It is hard earned over the long haul.

Therefore, Timothy, speak to them appropriately. Timothy’s ministry and our community here at Redeemer, should be marked by love and respect that gives honor to those who are our seniors.

How, practically, do we do that? That’s the next thing that Paul teaches Timothy in this passage. He wants him to understand that *tone* matters.

## 2. **Tone matters**

Paul writes:

**Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him** as you would a father (1 Timothy 5:1a ESV)

Because you recognize that man as a spiritual father, it needs to change your tone. The word translated here as “rebuke” comes from a word that carries the sense of metaphorically striking a person.<sup>1</sup> If you’re unsure what it looks like to verbally strike a person, just spend a few minutes scrolling through Twitter. Over the last two years, far too many “Timothies” have delivered verbal strikes to their elders.

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<sup>1</sup> BDAG, s.v. “ἐπιπλήσσω,” 377.

It's not uncommon to hear young, angry, Christian men speak deridingly and insultingly about those who are concerned with tone. “Tone police” is a common insult, and particularly so in our reformed circle.

But Paul was concerned about tone! And take a minute to consider the circumstances of this instruction. He is commissioning Timothy to right the ship in Ephesus – to pull the church out of theological ruin and to convince her to abandon the dangerous, heretical false teachers. This was urgent work! Eternal life and death hung in the balance!

And, in the midst of that commissioning, as Paul sends Timothy into THAT warzone to do theological triage, he stops to say: “And Timothy, watch your tone.”

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father (1 Timothy 5:1a  
ESV)

Commentator William Mounce notes:

His approach should not be one of domination but one of encouragement, including respect and honor.<sup>2</sup>

Before I go any further, I confess that I have fallen short in this regard. There have been times when I have used my position of spiritual authority to wag my finger and to browbeat those who are my spiritual fathers. I thought I was doing the Lord’s work. I saw error, and I wanted to correct it, and so I spoke harshly. I gave a condescending rebuke when I should have given a respectful encouragement. My intentions were in the right place, but my tone was not. And I’m sorry for that.

That being said, I want to encourage those of you who are the spiritual mothers and fathers in this congregation to strive to model humility and patience for the rest of us. As one commentator notes:

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<sup>2</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles – World Biblical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 271.

Just as it is difficult for an older person to respect the teaching and leadership of a younger man, so also it is difficult for a younger man to know how to instruct and correct the older people in the church.<sup>3</sup>

It's a complicated dance of love and respect. Paul didn't give Timothy permission to stop saying hard things. There were some real problems that needed to be addressed. But Timothy needed to do the right thing the right way. Sometimes people – especially younger people – are going to do the right thing the wrong way.

The household of God is made up of sinners who have been saved but who still don't perfectly resemble Jesus. We're inevitably going to step on some toes along the way. If your toe hasn't been stepped on yet, then stick around for another week.

It's clumsy. It's painful. But it's worth it. Because it's family. And tone matters.

Third, Paul reminds Timothy that:

### 3. Gender matters

In the same way that a person might read 1 Timothy 4:12 and mistakenly think that *age* no longer matters, someone might also read Galatians 3:28 and mistakenly think that *gender* no longer matters. There, Paul writes:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, **there is no male and female**, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28 ESV)

A person might be tempted to say: “There you have it! The church was the first organization to recognize that gender is no more than a social construct! Male, female; it's all GONE in Christ Jesus!”

However, when we read that passage in context, we clearly see that Paul is referring to our salvation. None of those worldly distinctions matter *with respect to our salvation*. But the gospel doesn't erase our gender in the same way that the gospel doesn't erase our ethnicity. P.S., we've

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<sup>3</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles – World Biblical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 269.

talked about how some of the generations before us made the mistake of thinking that the gospel DID try to erase ethnicity. They tried to create a one-size-fits-all church where every culture was forced to adopt *our* preferences of music, dress, and liturgy. They adopted ways of reading the Bible that eradicated the celebration of ethnic diversity. This dangerous distortion of the Bible was one of the factors behind the church's involvement with the residential school system. It was an abomination and the church's witness will be tarnished for centuries to come.

As we learn from that mistake, let's recognize that our generation is facing the temptation to do the same thing with gender. There is an enormous cultural push from outside the church *and* from within that wants us to abandon the idea of gender altogether. Many have adopted a way of reading the Bible that eliminates every biblical distinction between men and women. The differences that should be celebrated and enjoyed – differences in our roles, our strengths, and our weaknesses – are denied and suppressed.

But, as followers of Christ, Paul won't allow us to erase this distinction. There IS a difference between men and women, and Timothy is not to pretend otherwise.

You speak to your father differently than you speak to your mother, don't you? Your relationship with your sister is different than your relationship with your brother, isn't it? It's not a difference in quality. Those relationships are EQUAL in terms of their importance. But they are different. Gender is not a non-factor. It matters.

How, practically, does gender impact our relationships with one another? That's the final thing that Paul teaches Timothy in this text. He wants him to understand that, in the household of God, *purity* matters.

#### 4. Purity matters

Look one last time at our passage for this morning:

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, <sup>2</sup>older women as mothers, **younger women as sisters, in all purity.** (1 Timothy 5:1-2 ESV)

The word translated here as “purity” carries the sense of chastity.<sup>4</sup> In Timothy’s relationship with the young women in his church, he is to treat them as sisters, and he is to behave with complete sexual purity.

That means, he’s not to look at them like objects. He’s not to entertain inappropriate thoughts. He’s not to say or to do things that would make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable. He should show a discretion and a wisdom in his ministry that would protect both his sisters in Christ and himself from any credible charge of impurity.

Because his sister in Christ is equal with his brother in Christ, but she is also different. And his relationship with her should respect that difference.

Now I want to be careful to point out what Paul is NOT saying. It is possible to go too far in applying this passage and to unintentionally communicate to younger women that they are dangerous – like a ticking time bomb or a contagious disease. It’s possible to leave young women feeling like they are something to be feared and avoided by men.

I’ve spoken to women who have been made to feel that way, and it often distorts their image of themselves and even their image of sexuality. When the church preaches and practices the kind of “purity culture” that presents women as lust-inducing-objects that need to be hidden, real psychological damage is done. That damage often carries over even into marriage.

So, to be crystal clear, Paul is NOT telling Timothy that young women are dangerous.

But he IS telling Timothy that young women are different. And his interactions with them should be different. Timothy needs to be mindful of purity as he ministers to the young women in the household of God – for their sake, for his sake, and for the sake of the church.

This year alone, in this province alone, terrible things have happened in churches because this passage wasn’t taken seriously. Because sinful men were impure in their interactions with younger women in the church. Entire communities are reeling.

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<sup>4</sup> BDAG, s.v. “ἀγνεία,” 12.

We just have to get this right.

One of the ways that we can minister more effectively to every member of our church family in a healthy way is by adopting the models that are prescribed for us in the Bible. In Titus 2, for example, Paul calls upon the older women in the church in Crete to mentor the younger women. That's not because older men *can't* mentor and encourage younger women. It's because older women are better equipped to understand the challenges that younger women face.

Let's pursue this kind of culture here at Redeemer. Young women, if you don't already have an older woman who is praying with you and counselling you through the challenges of life then look around the room and find someone. Older women, if you don't already have someone that you are intentionally investing in, then look around the room and find someone.

In the same way, we're studying a letter from an older man, Paul, who is mentoring a younger man, Timothy. So, younger men, take a look around the room. Who here could be your "Paul"? Older men, who here could be your "Timothy"?

As we conclude this morning, I know that I beat this drum often. If I have a hobby horse, then this is it. But I am convinced by the Word of God that this is enormously important. And I'm convinced by 32 years in Canada that this is an area where we consistently miss the mark.

We are a family. And until we start living like who we are, we won't see new people coming to Christ here. Because Jesus promised the lost that there would be a FAMILY on the other side of conversion, and he's not a liar. If we're too busy, and too private, and too guarded to be the church, then Jesus will use someone else.

So, for the glory of God, and the spread of the gospel, and the enjoyment and fulfillment that it brings; brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers, let's strive to be the household of God.

To that end, let's pray together.