

Paul's Epistles to Individuals

Lesson 11 – 1 Timothy 5:1-16

I. Administering Correction (vs. 1-2)

Timothy is here instructed in how to administer correction to individuals, considering their particular age. We should be reminded that these instructions take into consideration Timothy's age as well, describing an equality with those who are younger.

A. *The Correction of Men (v. 1)*

The word "elder" here is the Greek "presbuteros" but the context suggests it is not indicating the office of "elder" as in **Titus 1:5** but instead refers to the relative age of a man. Not all older men are overseers but all overseers are older men so this does not authorize the sharp rebuke of one serving as a local church shepherd as some suggest, unless they "*continue in sin*" (**5:20**). Older men are not to be rebuked (Gr. "epiblesso"), which means to chide, upbraid, or rebuke, but are to be entreated (Gr. "parakaleo"), which means to beg, invite or beseech. Older men are to be respected by younger men and younger men should not position themselves so as to seem as condescending to the older. Younger men are to be approached as "brothers", or as peers. Respect for all is the expectation (**Rom 12:10, Heb. 13:1**), with older men being treated as fathers and younger men as brothers. Remember that even fathers have the responsibility to rise above provocation toward their sons (**Eph. 6:4**).

B. *The Correction of Women (v. 2)*

The "family" metaphor continues in the discussion of women as older women are to be respected as mothers and younger women as sisters. Here there is the added admonition to do so with "all purity". The addressing of women should always be accomplished so as to avoid accusations of impurity.

II. The Care of Widows (v. 3-16)

Paul addresses another class of individuals for whom special care is required, widows in deed. To "honor" here is to show respect or veneration because of value, even to include financial support (see **v. 17, Matt. 15:4-6** and **Eph. 6:2** regarding the financial implications of "honor").

A. *Widows "Indeed" (v. 3-5, 16)*

Much of the religious world confuses and broadens the qualifier "indeed" here as they tend to loosen many other Biblical definitions. The charge here is not unqualified. The context here shows the widows who are under consideration to be those who are destitute and without the support of descendants or family to assist them. Widows "indeed" (**v. 3, 16**) are contrasted with those who have "children or grandchildren" (**v. 4**) or who are "dependents" of younger women (**v. 16**). Those who do not qualify as widows "indeed" are not to be considered for permanent support by the local church (**v.16**). "Dependent" widows are to be cared for by their families so the local church will not be burdened. This is so the church can support the truly needy. In **Acts 6** we see that the care of the Grecian widows was secondary to the preaching of the gospel. The work of caring for needy saints is a worthwhile and required work of the local church, but only within the limits as provided by the Holy Spirit.

B. Additional Requirements for Widows Indeed (v. 9-10)

In addition to what has already been discussed, widows must not be considered “on the list” for local church support unless they are:

1. Not less than 60 years of age (**v. 9**),
Contrasted with the younger widows also discussed.
2. The wife of one man (**v. 9**),
Similar to **1 Tim. 3:2, 12**. Notice Paul recommends remarriage to younger widows (v.14)
3. Having a reputation for good works (**v. 10**),
“Well reported”, well known for good works.
4. Having brought up children (**v. 10**),
5. Having shown hospitality to strangers (**v. 10**),
A responsibility for all faithful saints – **Heb. 13:2, 1 Pet. 4:9**.
6. Having washed the saint’s feet (**v. 10**),
An act of humility and service – **John 13:4-15**.
7. Having assisted those in distress (**v. 10**), and
8. Having devoted herself to every good work (**v. 10**).

C. Family Responsibilities (v. 4, 8, 16)

As much as possible, the care for family members is first the responsibility of family (**v. 4, Eph. 6:2**). Failure to do so is to “deny the Faith”. Many times “the Faith” is used synonymously with “the truth”, “the Word” or “the gospel” (**Acts 6:7, Acts 16:5, Gal. 1:23**). To deny the faith is to deny Christ and his teaching. To be “worse than an infidel” is to be worse than one who has no faith. The word “infidel” is the Greek “apistos”, meaning “no faith” or “without faith”. Family is responsible for their own first so as to avoid an unnecessary burden on the church (**v. 16**). This is an example of the difference between individual responsibilities and those of the local church.

D. Special Discussion Regarding Younger Widows (v. 11-15)

Younger widows have some specific instructions here. In contrast to those who are at least 60 years of age, younger widows are to be excluded seemingly due to the potential likelihood for remarriage and the possibility of succumbing to related sinful temptations. This is not an insulting indictment of younger widows but a solemn warning of the potential pitfalls, especially in a time wherein options were limited for younger women in this situation. The mention of feeling “sensual desires in disregard of Christ” (**v. 11**) is translated “waxing wanton” in the KJV. Any person, having been married and finding themselves unexpectedly unmarried, should heed this as a warning and react appropriately. To succumb to such temptation is catastrophic to the Christian in any situation but is specifically stated as resulting in “condemnation” (**v. 12**) here. This section of scripture seems to address primarily those widows who, because of circumstances might be the permanent responsibility of the local church. A younger widow might well have a changed circumstance unlikely to the older widows.