

God's Household, Part 13: "Caring for Those in Need"

1 Timothy 5:1-16

Rev. Andrew Jun

[SERMON MANUSCRIPT]

Introduction

Hello church! Today we're picking up our sermon series through 1 Timothy called *God's Household*- we're going to spend the next couple of months to finish it up now. Today's sermon is from 1 Timothy 5:1-16 and is titled "Caring for Those in Need."

What memories do you think about when I mention the idea of "family"? Maybe it brings up some strong positive feelings: sweet experiences with parents and siblings growing up; being protected and provided for; or memorable events and traditions done together. But for most of us it probably also brings up strong *negative* feelings: *traumatic* experiences with parents and siblings growing up; *not* being protected or provided for; or *excruciating* events and traditions done together.

Well, how does the Gospel of Jesus Christ form- or reform- our idea of "family"? How can Jesus restore our family lives and create new ties in our relationships with family? Today I'm going to explain how 1 Timothy 5:1-16 answers this question.

I'll be talking about how the Gospel restores family relationships and influences the way we care for our biological families in times of need as well as how the Gospel creates another family- a spiritual one- and influences the way we care for each other in times of need.

Scripture Reading

It's been a little while since we have been in 1 Timothy so let me recap briefly. Paul wrote this letter to his disciple, Timothy, so that the church in Ephesus could know what the truth of the Gospel and biblical doctrine was and how to live in godliness as God's household (3:14-15). He addressed specific false teachings and the people who were spreading them. He also gave instructions to various groups of people, which he is doing here, specifically to how the church was to help widows in the church.

This is God's Word...

1 Timothy 5:1-16 (ESV):

1 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

3 Honor widows who are truly widows. 4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. 5 She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, 6 but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. 7 Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

9 Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, 10 and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. 11 But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry 12 and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. 13 Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. 14 So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. 15 For some have already strayed after

Satan. 16 If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

Amen!

Proposition

Let me share the “one thing” from 1 Timothy 5:1-16- this is the main message from God to us through this passage of Scripture:

***Care for one another well
in our homes and in God’s household.***

Organizational Statement

There are three parts to this sermon; they are the three principles of the church’s identity and responsibilities presented in 1 Timothy 5:1-16:

1. The church is a way God *redeems our ideas* of “family” (vv. 1-2).
2. The church ministers to *their own families* in times of need (vv. 3-8).
3. The church ministers to *each other* in times of need (vv. 9-16).

Prayer

Let’s pause and pray together before we dive in.

Heavenly Father, you said through the prophet that your words do not return empty, but they accomplish what you desire and achieve your purposes. So at this time in the preaching of your Word, we trust this promise- may my words actually be Your words that accomplish what you desire and achieve your purpose in us today! In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

→ **Transition:** Let’s take a look at the first of the three main principles for today’s sermon...

Sermon Outline

I. The church is a way God *redeems our ideas* of “family” (1-2).

- A. Let’s try to understand how verses 1-2 teach us that *the church is a way God redeems our ideas of “family.”***

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

- 1. Here specifically, Paul instructed Timothy to relate to others in the church as he would with his own family members.**
 - a) It appeared that Timothy had a challenging role in Ephesus at the local church that he was called to pastor. Check it out: Timothy had to confront the false teachers that had abandoned their faith and who were leading others to do the same (1:3-4). He also had to look for qualified elders and deacons to lead the church with him (3:1-13). As well, he was younger than many in the church and so he had to win their respect by being a strong example and executing his calling to preach and teach the Word (4:11-16).

- b) So you could probably imagine that there were a lot of relational tensions between Timothy and others in the church in light of this! Paul gave him some guiding principles about how to relate with fellow church members. The word “rebuke” in verse 1 means to harshly disapprove of someone. This specific Greek word is used only here in the entire Bible and it’s more of a “bad rebuke.” There are many other times *other* words for “rebuke” are used in the New Testament, and these usually referred to a “good rebuke” (like it was truly done out of love for the other person).
- c) The difference would be like if I snapped very harshly at my kids because I was in a sour mood (“bad rebuke”) compared to if I corrected them firmly and calmly as a way of disciplining them out of love (“good rebuke”). So instead of rebuking this “bad” way, Timothy should “encourage” the older men, younger men, older women, and younger women. Timothy’s overarching goal was to *build up* and *support* the other men and women in the church towards solid faith in Christ and towards lives of godliness.
- d) What we need to know is that this local church in Ephesus was not *like* a spiritual family- they actually *were* a spiritual family. Timothy was to treat his church members like family members because they *were* spiritual family members. He was to treat older men in the church like fathers and older women like mothers, sensitively and wisely (because he still had to exert authority sometimes). He was to treat younger men like brothers and younger women like sisters, with the concern and love of an older brother. Paul added on the specific instruction of interacting with younger women without any inappropriate feelings and gestures- “in all purity.”
- e) Context: But if you’re like me, you might be thinking, “But *my* family is pretty messed up- I didn’t have a very good example of how a husband and wife were supposed to treat each other; how a parent and child were supposed to treat each other; how brothers and sisters were supposed to treat each other. How am I supposed to know how to do either as a disciple of Jesus now?”
- f) Context: We can take heart, because God does not leave us without any guidance. If you believe that Jesus is your Savior and King, then the Scriptures say that we are children of God and led by the Holy Spirit himself.

Romans 8:14-15 (ESV): *For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”*

- g) In light of this truth, we can instead say this: “So even though my family is so broken and pretty dysfunctional, I don’t need to be afraid. The Holy Spirit assures me that I have a Heavenly Father who is perfect: perfect in love AND perfectly guiding me. In Christ, I am redeemed and I can experience change in how I deal with people- how I deal with my new, spiritual family and how I deal with my old, biological family. His Word reveals God’s heart; His Spirit guides me in how to do this.”
- h) Context: The main principle here in verses 1-2 is that *the church is a way God redeems our ideas of “family.”* Now we have a spiritual family that we are to build up and care for as our spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ. We have the wonderful opportunity to build relationships with many older men and women, relating to them as spiritual parents by drawing from their perspectives on relationships, career, God, and faith; learning solid spiritual habits from them to grow more intimate with God; and listening to their life experiences. We also have the wonderful opportunity to build relationships with many younger men and women, relating with them as spiritual brothers and sisters by developing healthy friendships; appreciating people who are different than us; and resolving conflicts in a biblical way. This is what family does!
- i) Context: Second, as we learn how to do this as a spiritual family, it is training for how to do it in our biological families too! When I was in university, God really grew in my

heart a love for serving people in church. But when I went home for holidays, I remember being so strongly challenged to serve my own dad, mom, and sister in the same way that I served at church. So even though I wanted to go out with my friends, there were times I chose to fix stuff at my sister's apartment or to clean up around the house with my parents. Also at that time of my life, I got to know a pastor in our church who was so intentional about discipling his children (and he had a lot, like eight!) to know and follow Jesus. Those were the building blocks in my own paradigm for marriage and parenting that I try to live out today. I experienced this truth firsthand that *the church is a way God redeems our ideas of "family."* God is still doing this in my life now and God wants to do this in all of us!

→ **Transition:** Now this is a nice transition to the second main principle from this Scripture.

Sermon Outline (continued)

II. The church ministers to *their own families* in times of need (3-8).

A. I'd like for us to see how verses 3-8 teach us that *the church ministers to their own families in times of need.*

1 Timothy 5:3-8 (ESV): *3 Honor widows who are truly widows. 4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. 5 She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, 6 but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. 7 Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

1. Here specifically, Paul instructed Timothy and the church in Ephesus to make sure that they took care of the widows that they had within their own biological families.

- a) So Paul started out by saying "honor widows who are truly widows." The specific word "honor" here meant to show respect to someone and usually doing so by providing some financial aid. Paul wanted the church to take care of those widows who were truly in need (which we'll get to in the third main point) because widows were numerous in the ancient world and thus also in the church. And here, Paul addressed believers who had widows in need in their own biological families- to make sure that they were the ones who were properly caring for their own family members in times of need.
- b) In Roman society in the first century, there was no formal welfare system for people in need, like widows. If a woman's husband died and still had the dowry (the monetary gift from the wife's parents to the husband), then she could stay afloat. In the unfortunate case where the dowry was already used, the widow would find herself in a tough situation. In these cases, widows were supposed to be taken care of by their children, grandchildren, or extended families. Here in verses 3-8, Paul reinforced this responsibility that believers had.
- c) To state it Paul's way specifically from verse 4: *But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household.* Woah- hold on for a second! Paul said that believers were to *learn* godliness- they were to train themselves to synchronize their faith in the Gospel and the teaching of the Bible with their lives. And a *primary* realm of life to do this was in the area of their families! They were to care for the people in their families who were in seasons of need- namely widows- as an expression of their faith in the Gospel and sound doctrine!

- d) Context: Let me pause and mention this important note to us all. For those of you who are caring for family members in need right now or have devoted a significant amount of time, money, and energy to do so in the past, let me just say that your ministry to them is important! It's important to God! It is an expression of our faith that- when the rubber meets the road- is tested to be real by the ways we try to minister to our family members. May you be encouraged that this pleases God so much and may you be strengthened to know that God will certainly be at work in your homes and families!
- e) Paul says it in verse 4 in a way that sounds a lot like Asian culture today: children and grandchildren were to *make some return to their parents*; they were to "give back" the loving care that their parents gave to them in raising them throughout childhood. Evaluating the financial investment into raising children sounds a bit impersonal, but it's helpful to think about it! The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that it costs about \$233,000 to raise one child from birth to seventeen years old in 2020. That's not including paying for college if parents do that too! As a parent I can attest to this: it is a big investment of our money, time, energy, and care- it's awesome, but it's expensive!
- f) But the motivation and the heart behind a child or grandchild to care for their parents, grandparents, or other family members in times of need must be viewed from the lens of the Gospel, which is what Paul does. Look at verse 8: *But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.* There is a connection between caring for older or in-need family members and one's faith in Jesus!
- g) Illustration: Just think about this for a second: How did your mother show you care? To share about my mom, she showed me love and care by feeding me at all hours of the night, working night shifts for years, taking me to sporting events like baseball games, and speaking encouraging words to me when I was down. Now it would be terrible if I said, "The only reason I care about my mom now is because I must pay her back." The proper, normal response would be, "I have received this abundant, sacrificial love from my mom; it is my joy to serve her now."
- h) Context: Unfortunately, our experiences with our parents are probably not even close to that ideal. But we can go further by applying the Gospel: "Because of the overflowing love and care of God my Father, I have love to give to my parents, grandparents or other family members needing care." Our family members are not perfect and we probably did not experience love from our parents even close to perfectly. But the Gospel says, "Even though my parents' love was not perfect or even good, I can still love and care for them because my Heavenly Father's love and care IS perfect!"
- i) Context: For all of us, our ministry in our homes is super important! We might find it easier to serve people in church- who are generally more civil and don't have the same baggage with you. We might find it easier to serve people at work- there are boundaries and people value your work. But let me tell you what the Bible says here: God wants you to serve your families AND he gives us the physical and emotional strength to be able to do it...IN Christ! The Gospel says, "Even though my own love runs out, I can still love because my Heavenly Father's love never runs out for me or for anyone else!"
- j) Context: I have to give a disclaimer here though. I know that there are people whose situations with their parents are not that clear, like if your family's financial need is because your parents mismanaged their money or if they do not work (even though they are capable of it). There is some discernment required on our parts. But besides these cases, the needs that our family members have- financial or otherwise- can be opportunities for us to exercise our faith in real life, which produces real godliness!

2. Now at this time, I'm shifting perspectives here- I was talking about those *ministering* to those in need, but for a moment I'm going to address *those who ARE* in a season of need.

- a) This is a short but important point. In the Scriptures it is very clear that God has a special place in his heart for widows. Just look at this description of God:

Psalm 68:5 (NLT): *Father to the fatherless, defender of widows- this is God, whose dwelling is holy.*

The Law that the LORD gave to Israel reflected this part of God's character- this is why he forbade the mistreatment of widows and orphans (Exodus 22:22) and specifically commanded the Israelites to leave unpicked grain, olives, and grapes behind for widows and orphans in the community (Deuteronomy 24:19-21). This is all to say that widows, orphans, and all others in need are important to God because *this is who God is!*

- b) Jesus said this in Matthew 5:3 (ESV): *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* When we understand our true spiritual state (which is often facilitated through our physical state)- that we are poor in spirit and desperately in need of help from God- we are in prime position to receive the grace of God! We see clearly that we are in no position to save ourselves- we need divine help given to us! Our Father gives us faith to see that he has provided this salvation through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Our sins are paid for; we are made right with God; we are adopted into God's family.
- c) So Paul wrote in our passage today in verses 5-6: *She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.* In other words, those widows who do belong to God by faith in Christ can trust that their Heavenly Father will take care of them. The hope that God gives her in those prayers are expressions of true godliness (living consistently with the faith they profess). However, those widows who respond to their difficult situations in self-indulgent behavior and activities actually show that faith is absent in their hearts!
- d) Context: We have plenty of people in seasons of need in our church: recently unemployed, single parents (having to work and raise kids), those suffering from debilitating illnesses or injuries. It's not easy at all, but you can still find comfort and joy that your Heavenly Father cares for you. He refines your faith, which (as it says in 1 Peter 1:7) is more precious than gold. Don't lose sight of the dignity and value of this in God's eyes. And we can receive all the ways God cares for us- through our biological families and spiritual families too!

→ **Transition:** Let's move on to the third main principle from today's passage of Scripture.

Sermon Outline (continued)

III. The church ministers to *each other* in times of need (9-16).

- A. Finally, let's see how verses 9-16 instruct us that *the church ministers to each other in times of need*- this is the third and last main principle.

1 Timothy 5:9-16 (ESV): *9 Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, 10 and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. 11 But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry 12 and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. 13 Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from*

house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. 14 So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. 15 For some have already strayed after Satan. 16 If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

1. **Shifting back to *people ministering to others in need*, we see here that Paul instructed Timothy and church in Ephesus to take care of the widows in their spiritual family- that is, in the church- too.**
 - a) Paul is talking about making sure that the widows who really need help and have no biological family members to support them to still get the help they need- notable from the church. That's clear back in verse 3 and then here in verse 16: *Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.*
 - b) In verses 9-10, Paul wanted Timothy to prioritize those who were most in need- because they didn't have family to help them- and also deserving of the financial support from the church. The qualifications that Paul stated here were that they had to be sixty years old or older; they had to be "one husband women" (in other words, they were faithful to their husbands before they passed); and they had to have a good reputation, been hospitable, a humble servant, cared for others in need, and devoted to doing good.
 - c) Of course, I would imagine that help would be extended to other widows who did not clearly meet these requirements, as acts of mercy and kindness. For these older, widows described like this, benevolence would be most needed. As well, Paul said in verse 5 that these types of widows were already mature in faith so that they "set their hope on God and continued in supplications and prayers night and day." In other words, they would see that this benevolence was God's love and care for them.
 - d) Moving on to verses 11-13, Paul then gave some instruction regarding how to handle widows that are still young enough to remarry. Paul said in verse 11 to *refuse to enroll younger widows* because of the concern- actually it was happening in the Ephesian church- that perhaps their strong desire to get married would lead them to marrying an unbeliever and turn away from their faith in Christ. In first-century Roman culture, which is similar to here in Indonesia, this meant changing your religious identification to be the same as your spouse.
 - e) So those younger widows- whose faith was still be shaky- might be tempted to short circuit God's faith-building process in them by finding her own means to satisfy her needs and wants. Actually in verse 15, Paul mentioned that some widows that used to be part of the Ephesian church had *already strayed after Satan* in this way. As well, perhaps if these younger widows were given handouts by the church, they would not have the urgency to seek after God and also find legitimate means of income or solid potential husbands and would instead be tempted to become "idle," as Paul says in verse 13, and just waste their days in gossip or meaningless activities. In this way, we see the complexity of benevolence cases, especially situations when attempts to "help" might actually hinder some people from developing faith.
 - f) Context: One big "yay God" testimony of seeing the Gospel at work in our church during this pandemic has been the establishment of our benevolence fund and helping the members of our church. We know that we've been entrusted with this money to most effectively come alongside people who need help. One thing we've learned, however, is that it's really difficult to discern need and what will *best* help people- both financially and in their faith development. We may make mistakes, but we want to still do it because it's important for the church to minister to each other in times of need.

- g) **Context:** Let me end with this final thought. May the financial help that the church extends to those in need help their faith in Christ get stronger! And there are probably more cases of people who may have money but are in need in other ways and are tempted to stray away from the Lord. These days there is so much hardship that we are experiencing: It could be issues with mental health; it could be sickness or tragedy that strikes loved ones or themselves; it could be struggling with being alone or isolated; it is actually so many things!
- h) **Context:** The common link- whether it is benevolence or other forms of care- is that God uses our ministries to each other- believers who are together the local church- to show each other that we are loved and cared for by their Father. In light of how our Father cares for us, we have made a covenant together as a spiritual family is to care for one another: let's check up on those in the family we haven't seen in a while; let's make time to share a meal or visit someone; let's write an encouraging message to someone we know needs it; let's persistently pray for and intercede on each other's behalf. Family, we share a Heavenly Father who has blessed us in every way in Christ; let's disburse those blessings to one another!

→ **Transition:** Let's wrap up this sermon with how we're going to apply this Scripture in our lives.

Conclusion

IV. Life Application

A. Here are some next steps that we can take as a response to the thrust of 1 Timothy 5:1-16 to care for one another well in our homes and in God's household.

1. What are the specific ways that you can minister to your family in need and/or fellow church members who are in need right now?
 - a) Our actions- done by faith in God's working in you- can lead to real change to truly love people that are difficult to care for or that you're called to serve. When we step out in faith, then it opens up conversations and perspectives that can change. So think about specific ways the Holy Spirit is convicting you to minister to your family members and/or to your brothers and sisters in Christ who are in need.
2. Think about your attitudes regarding your family and/or fellow church members- what does the Holy Spirit need to change in you regarding them?
 - a) Allow the Spirit of God to convict you of the attitudes of our hearts that need to be confessed. In Christ, our Father joyfully forgives, heals, and restores us. In light of the truth that we are God's children and have the infinite supply of God's love, we can truly love and minister to others!

→ **Transition:** At this time, we'll transition back to our live service and have some time to respond to God's Word together as a church.

© 2021 Harvest Mission Community Church

This manuscript has been lightly edited and formatted. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template. Should there be questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should presume any error to be with the transcriber/editor rather than with the original speaker.