

*1Do not rebuke an older man, but appeal to him as to a father. Treat younger men as brothers, 2older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity. 1 Tim 5:1,2*

Paul in this passage is transitioning from instruction on doctrine to instruction on behavior. How do we treat those that we fellowship with, our brothers and sisters in Christ? Paul teaches that we must show respect and honor much as is done in a healthy family. The Jewish Christians were brought up with standards of behavior. They had the commandment to honor your father and mother. Paul wrote in Ephesians,

*1Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. Eph 6:1-3*

The verse Paul referred to is from Exodus 20:12, *Honor your father and mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. Ex 20:12* This scripture deals with the interrelations of family members, child honoring their parents. Jesus spoke of this and added in the Law of one who speaks evil of their parents.

*3And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4“For God said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,’ and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.’ 5“But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,” 6he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. Matt 15:3-5*

The Jews had been given the law but their tradition made it possible to dishonor you parents, *invalidated the word of God*, if what should have been used for parents was given to God. So, though they had the Law, they were able to bend the Law to meet their own needs. The Gentiles didn't have Jewish law, they weren't part of the people of Israel, but some of them were just good people, *doing instinctively the things of the Law*. They lived by the Law because it was *written in their hearts*, their inner selves, their consciences were instructing them.

*14For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, 15in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them. Rom 2:14,15*

But in Paul's day, when he was writing this to Timothy, as a general rule no one was living according to the commands of God. Paul wrote in the Book of Romans, *They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.” Rom 3:12* If Timothy was going to lead the Ephesians in the righteous path, it would not just be about loving God, he would also have to instruct them in godly relationships.

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In our highly educated culture today, knowledge has not produced righteous behavior. The popular culture mocks Godly virtue; they freely rebuke parents, authorities and elders. They dishonor and take advantage of those younger than they are, they steal from defenseless widows and mothers, do not protect younger women and mock authority.

They live by a rule of ‘anything but *absolute purity*’ in relationships. It is one thing when this type of behavior exists in the world outside the church but when it is present within the body of Christ how are we to be the shining city of a hill. The church needs instruction.

Our passage this, here in First Timothy, takes the same type of family behavior and honor and applies it to brothers and sisters in the church. If we have been brought up in the church we are aware that our behavior to those in the church should be one of love, loving our neighbor as our self. The fact is this type of behavior is dependent on the work of the Spirit of God in our lives. The grace of God instructing us to deny ungodliness.

*11For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, Titus 2:11,12*

It is the responsibility of the church and it's leaders to instruct believers in righteous living and that is what Paul was encouraging Timothy to do. Since this is Mother's Day, acknowledging that this is not a Christian holiday, but it is more than just a day set aside to help Hallmark sell cards. Children are to honor their mothers. That is in behavior and support but also by regarding wise council. Paul states, *Do not rebuke an older man, but appeal to him as to a father*, but he could just as well said don't talk back to an older woman (your mother) but in kindness appeal to her, plead your case with honor and respect. This is good advice on treating all women, older ones with the respect you would have for you mother and younger women *as sisters, with absolute purity*. This also means treat women of you same age *as sisters, with absolute purity*.

So today is Mother's Day and for us who are husbands it is also wive's day. Here is a little background on the day in our country.

*The modern holiday of Mother's Day was first celebrated in 1908, when Anna Jarvis held a memorial for her mother. In that year, the U.S. Congress rejected a proposal to make Mother's Day an official holiday, joking that they would also have to proclaim a "Mother-in-law's Day". However, owing to the efforts of Anna Jarvis, by 1911 all U.S. states observed the holiday. In 1914, Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation designating Mother's Day, held on the second Sunday in May, as a national holiday to honor mothers. wiki*

Mother's Day is a new holiday but honoring mothers and women is very much a Christian concept. Christianity embraces the equal but different concept when it comes to men and women. Most Pagan cultures had considered women as property but Christianity views women as equal but different (*your equal partner in God's gift of new life*). Genesis 1:27 states God created both man and woman in His image, *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them*.

*You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. 1 Pet 3:7*

*In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered. 1 Pet 3:7 NLT*

With verse three Paul begins instruction on how to treat widows in the church. This is something we don't think as much about today because of government programs like Social Security but at the time this letter was written a woman whose husband had died might have no means of support and the church would help out but also the family were

to help. These verses on widows fit with the Mother's day theme for they too would have been wives and mothers. Now, Paul instruction referring to *widows indeed*.

*3Honor widows who are widows indeed; 4but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.*

Paul says the church is to make special concessions to *widows indeed*, widows who don't have other family. But for widows with family, *children, grandchildren and/or parents*, they were to remain connected to their own families. *This is acceptable in the sight of God*, God had instituted the church but it was not to replace the most basic institution of society, the family. Widows were to live out their faith within their families, *practice piety in regard to their own family*. Many of these families had Pagan backgrounds and the Christian widow had the opportunity to witness for Christ in the family setting. They would be able to honor their parents with their care, *make some return to their parents*. In this way they would honor the members of their families and *this is acceptable in the sight of God*.

But there were in the church true widows, *widows indeed, who had been left alone*. These widows needed assistance. They were to be *not less than sixty years old*, so these were older widows.

*5Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. 6But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives. 7Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach. 8But 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. 1 Tim 5:5-8*

We are talking about the responsibility of the church in the situations with widows, widows who the church would be responsible for. This was a way to show love for the weaker members of the body of Christ, showing honor to women, to mothers. This support was not welfare but was linked to the godly behavior of the woman. She needed to *have fixed her hope on God and continued in entreaties and prayers night and day*. (vs 5) Bad things sometimes happen to good people and it is noble to help those in need but this is more than that. This refers to women were brought under the care of the church. These women needed to be above reproach. *She who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives*. (vs 6) You can see how the church would be just enabling bad behavior to support one that was not a true believer.

Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach. (vs 7) Paul's instruction was best for the reputation of the widow above reproach but also to keep the character of the body of believers as a whole pure and pleasing to God. Then he brings in again the responsibility of the the family members, even distant family members to care for their widows. *8But 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. 1 Tim 5:5-8* This reminds me of Boaz

*The kinsman-redeemer is a male relative who, according to various laws of the Pentateuch, had the privilege or responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger, or need. The Hebrew term (go el) for kinsman-redeemer designates one who delivers or rescues (Genesis 48:16; Exodus 6:6) or redeems property or person*

Boaz, who was related to Naomi, in the book of Ruth, ends up marrying Naomi's her daughter-in-law. Ruth's husband had died and she stayed with Naomi. Christ is regarded as the believers kinsman-redeemer. He redeems the bride of Christ. *So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters. Hebrews 2:11* It is in the character of God to honor those He created and gave his life to save. Jesus is God made flesh and *He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*. By honoring others we reflect the redeeming character of God.