

1 Timothy 5-6 • Seven Kinds of People

Introduction

It's not unusual for the average Western church to be organized around the needs of the main demographic groups its particular congregation is composed of. Are there a lot of children present? The "children's ministry" is one of the highest priorities. A lot of seniors? Then perhaps the "senior ministry" and so forth. Paul identifies for Timothy the main groups within the Early Church and outlines not only the proper approach for ministering to them, but how to properly prioritize their greater needs from the perspective of the working of the Gospel. This could be valuable in helping us decide how to approach such things in our own churches today and how to decide what's biblically important and what is not.

¹Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, ²the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.

[Read v.1-2]

Q: What is the common relationship among all the examples presented?

A: They're all family members: father, mother, sister.

Q: What is the significance of relating to others "in all purity"? How is that accomplished?

A: "Purity" is another way of stating "without being polluted by sin". It's the biblical way of stating that sin needs to be conspicuously absent from the pursuit of personal relationships.

Point: Paul is first and foremost describing for Timothy to treat the family of God like a real family with one's behavior in submission to God's Word and ways.

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. 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.

⁹A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, ¹⁰having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work. ¹¹But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married, ¹²thus incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge. ¹³At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not

[Read v.3-16]

Q: What are the three groups of people listed here?

1. Older widows
2. Younger widows
3. Family members of widows

Q: What is the greater goal set for addressing the needs of all widows, young and old alike? Is it to meet their physical needs?

A: Meeting their physical needs is actually the secondary goal. The first and foremost goal is spiritual that both older widows' lives "may be above reproach" (v.7) and younger widows' lives "give the enemy no occasion for reproach". (v.14)

Q: What does the word "reproach" mean?

A: It's incurring scorn and rebuke from others for sin and is connected with being personally shamed for what we've allowed sin to do in our life. Christ is often said to have born our reproach, meaning that on the cross He bore the shame of our sin.

Point: Paul is pointing out that the first and foremost priority is to avoid becoming a visible example of allowing sin to hold in our life and to first and foremost choose to live faithfully. Physical needs are always secondary to the spiritual.

Q: How does the requirement for existing family members to take care of each other meet the greater conditions of Christ?

A: Our foremost commandment is to love one another. Family members are fulfilling Christ's commandment to love by taking care of immediate family members.

Point: While one's earthly family is still available they're to take primary responsibility, but in their absence the family of God meets the same commitment to love others in their earthly family's place.

merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention. ¹⁴Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach; ¹⁵for some have already turned aside to follow Satan. ¹⁶If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

¹⁷The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." ¹⁹Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. ²⁰Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. ²¹I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. ²²Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

²³No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

²⁴The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after.

²⁵Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.

^{6:1}All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against. ²Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.

Q: What is the greater requirement provided here for widows? Are they defined exclusively according to their physical needs?

A: The greater requirement is that they are found to be pursuing faithful and godly lives. (v.10) In fact, ungodly behavior is actually a reason for disqualifying them from receiving support. (v.13-15)

Application: *The church's resources are supposed to be viewed as a spiritual investment not just on the part of the giver, but the receiver. Accountability is a key requirement for whom the church chooses to support, even to whom it's actually obligated.*

[Read v.17-25]

Q: What is the similarity between what is most highly prized in a widow and again here in an elder?

A: Spiritual faithfulness. (Have the group pick out examples of this from these verses.)

Q: Who selects elders?

A: The inference in v.22 to "not lay hands upon anyone too hastily" seems to confirm that in this case, at least, it was Timothy in the role of pastor who made the selection.

Q: In the average Western church today, the leadership structure is set up so that its board members or elders are charged with primarily being the ones holding the pastor accountable. How is that confirmed here?

A: It's not, and in fact is stated as being the opposite case, that the pastor is charged with selection of the elders and also in holding **THEM** accountable.

Q: What is Paul's greater meaning in v.22 & 24-25? What is he trying to teach Timothy when it comes to selecting and holding leadership accountable?

A: Pastors can make mistakes. These can be mitigated by not acting too hastily and by careful examination of the spiritual fruit of leaders' lives in advance of appointing them.

Application: *The issues of compensating and taking care of the physical needs of full-time staff are secondary to the greater care of their spiritual condition. The work of discipleship continues even at the highest levels of leadership within the church.*

[Read v.1-2]

Q: What would you say is the greater concern where being a slave is concerned?

A: Like all the examples leading up to this, it's spiritual faithfulness.

Q: How is a slave's physical situation secondary to their spiritual condition?

A: Although spiritually they are freed, their earthly status is to remain unchanged for the sake of the Gospel.

Application: *We're supposed to have a greater concern for sharing the Gospel and being a living, visible witness of it than for our own personal comfort, gain, or stature.*

³If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

[Read v.3-5]

Q: What issue did this directly address in the Early Church which is still a recurring issue for the church to this very day?

A: The false teaching that for the sake of unity to not worry about or place an importance on doctrine.

Q: What is inferred as the true cause of disunity in the church?

A: Persons who don't really believe and put into practice the Word of God.

Q: Paul drew parallels to each previous groups' greater spiritual needs over the material. How does he do that here?

A: Having rejected sound doctrine, they make themselves spiritually sick. Instead of feeding on the truth of God's Word, they feed on empty questions and the meanings of words which leads to all kinds of "envy, strife" and spiritual turmoil – they become the exact opposite of "godliness".

Q: What is their ultimate goal?

A: Personal profit. They're not truly concerned for their own (or others') spiritual needs but only in meeting present physical desires.

Q: How did Paul instruct Titus to deal with such troublemakers?

A: They were to be denied membership in the church after being warned two times.

*Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,
Titus 3:10*

Application: *Doctrine matters to such a degree that it is one of only two things, sin being the other, that can justify a permanent break in fellowship and personal relationships.*

⁶But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

¹¹But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³I charge you in the presence of God, who

[Read v.6-19]

Q: What is the main thought connecting this group with the previous?

A: In v.5 troublemakers are identified as those who "suppose that godliness is a means of gain" which is contrasted here with the statement that "godliness is actually a great gain when accompanied by contentment".

Q: So is the problem wealth?

A: The problem is one's spiritual health, a weak one leading to discontent and the pursuit of personal gain, a strong one continuing to embrace the faithfulness that yields contentment in all situations.

Q: So is Paul talking about all rich people here?

A: No, it clearly states in v.9 "those who **WANT** to get rich". He's speaking about priorities that lead to choices and actions.

Q: So how does "the love of money" adversely affect someone?

A: Their desire causes them to "fall into temptation" which begins a greater spiral downward eventually plunging them "into ruin and destruction". (v.9) The end result is actually the worst spiritual result possible where they find that they've "wandered away from the faith". (v.10)

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gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

¹⁷Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

²⁰O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”— ²¹which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.

Grace be with you.

Point: *Once again the spiritual outweighs the physical in terms of not only the benefits but the consequences.*

Q: How does Paul say a “man of God” should deal with this?

1. Flee (v.11). “...flee from these things...”
2. Follow (v.11). “...pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness”.
3. Fight (v.12) “Fight the good fight of faith...” “Faith” also being able to be translated as “faithfulness”.

Q: What does it mean when Paul says we should do these things “without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ”?

A: It’s another way of commanding personal faithfulness, the conscious choice to deny sin and its offerings in favor of God’s Word and ways.

Q: What is the difference between Paul’s teaching in v.6-15 versus this last paragraph in v.17-19?

A: The first teaching is a general teaching about the dangers of placing undue desire on obtaining wealth, the second is teaching how to handle wealth if one is blessed with it.

Point: *There are those who have been granted wealth who have not compromised their faith in order to get it. In all cases, the attitude of the heart is the most important consideration.*

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

[Read v.20-21]

Q: How does Paul’s reference to a false knowledge speak to a specific problem in the Early Church?

A: By this time one of the big problems were Gnostics, people who claimed to have “full knowledge” of spiritual things who were trying to influence the church with their false teachings and alternative ideas.

Point: *Every generation of the church seems to have to deal with a self-styled “intelligentsia” class of people who believe they can supplement or outright replace the literal Word of God with worldly ideas and concepts.*

Q: How does Paul describe the activities of the so-called “educated”?

A: “...worldly and empty chatter”. This is clearly something working against the greater good of the church because it’s further defined as actually being “opposing arguments”. In other words, it’s actually working **against** the truth of the Gospel.

Q: What was Timothy’s responsibility?

A: “...guard what has been entrusted to you”. Another way of translating this is to “guard the deposit”, to keep safe and intact what had been committed to him through Paul. It’s the picture of a guard on a bank vault.

[Continued on the next page.]

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Q: What had been committed to Timothy through Paul?

A: God had given the Gospel message, the deposit of truth, to Paul.

according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

1 Timothy 1:11

Paul in turn committed it to Timothy.

This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

1 Timothy 1:18-19

And now Timothy was to “guard what has been entrusted you”.

Application: *This is the task of the church today, that we may be faithful to guard the deposit and pass it on to others. The commandment to love one another is inextricable from our duty to teach, uphold, and instill the truth.*

Overall Application

Q: What is the greater issue in 5:1-2 where personal relationships are concerned?

A: The spiritual issue. Relationships should be pursued “with all purity”, free from the pollutive effects of sin.

Q: What is the greater issue in 5:3-16 where the treatment of widows is highlighted?

A: The spiritual issue. The goal of support is to be beyond “reproach”, the shame experienced for having others point to sin in our life. Being faithful in spiritual things takes priority over being faithful in material things.

Q: What is the greater issue in 5:17-25 where church leadership is concerned?

A: The spiritual issue. They are to be examined both before selection and while serving, held accountable according to the quality of their personal faithfulness.

Q: What is the greater issue in 6:1-2 where slaves are concerned?

A: The spiritual issue. They are to be more concerned about their witness and testimony for the Gospel than for their own personal status or comfort. In fact, earthly circumstances may not change in order to obtain a stronger spiritual witness.

Q: What is the greater issue in 6:3-5 where troublemakers are concerned?

A: The spiritual issue. The rejection of sound doctrine leads to factions and disunity ultimately having to be removed from the body of Christ.

Q: What is the greater issue in 6:6-19 where the rich are concerned?

A: The spiritual issue. We’re to remain content no matter what our financial situation, pursuing personal faithfulness first and foremost. Those blessed with material wealth have the responsibility to use it wisely for the kingdom. The spiritual always outweighs the physical not only for the benefits but the consequences as well.

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Q: What is the greater issue in 6:20-21 where the educated are concerned?

A: The spiritual issue. We're to preserve the preaching of the truth as an obligation not just to this generation but all future ones. It's part and parcel of fulfilling the commandment to love one another.

In the end, no matter which demographic group one belongs, the first and foremost need is maintaining spiritual faithfulness regardless of the circumstances or life-situation in which we find our self. There is an obligation to meet physical needs, but it's always secondary to the spiritual. It's heart-breaking that so many ministries are predicate on the reverse, hoping to meet a physical need in order to get an opportunity to address the spiritual.