Title: Respect to One and All

Date: 11/8/26

Subject: Respect is to be shown to people

Scripture: 1 Timothy 5

Respect for people of all age groups. 5:1, 2

These instructions were originally written to Timothy who was a younger man. People in his church were older than him and younger. He was to deal with each age segment as if they were his family, and they were as part of the family of God. A major identity for Christians is they comprise the family of God. Each local church is a family group of the universal family of God. Everybody contributes to the church family.

We can apply the instructions to our relationships, broaden them to how we relate to people in the older or younger segments. I'm not getting into when a person transitions into the older. Two of the directives have clarifying information. These attitudes and approaches aren't limited to people in these age groups.

The first insight is to not rebuke harshly but instead exhort. The original language spoke of expressing strong disapproval, speaking sharply, attacking another person, being in a person's face, scolding, assaulting, being abrasive, lashing out in anger like a battering ram. I heard a story of an 8 year old child yelling at his grandparent to get back in the room and not come out unless they're told to. Social media and the ability to instantly communicate have made it much easier for people to be super critical, rude and harsh.

The person who uses this approach seeks to put the other person in their place and establish their superiority. The rebuker wants to show how much they know and the how little the other knows. This approach adds to the problem and definitely won't contribute to family harmony.

Instead, the approach needs to be made with respect. Older people have had more life experiences. Most likely they've had more time walking with the Lord. They can be set in their ways and it can be difficult for them to admit wrongdoing. The approach needs to be love and gentleness when correcting people, any person, no matter the age. The goal is restoration, reconnection with the rest of the family.

The second insight is to treat younger men as brothers. The natural tendency is to want to look down on other people or lord it over them. My younger brother is not quite two years younger. He had this nasty habit of growing fast and catching up to me in height. I didn't like that. When I'd grow a little bit taller I'd call him “Shorty.” The process repeated until he passed me and never looked back growing to 6’2” of 6’3”. Let's say 6’2” rather than concede that extra inch. My condescending attitude didn't pay off.

We shouldn't look down on other members of the family of God. They’re co-heirs with us of Christ and his blessings. They have a right to be treated that way. They aren't our servants but a brother or sister.

The third insight is treat older women as mothers. How do people treat moms? Mother's Day is one of the highest spending holidays with people moved by nostalgia, sentimentality and emotion to celebrate mom.

Athletes who sign pro contracts often speak of buying their mom a car, house or both. When they make a good play, they look into the camera, "Hi, mom." People seek to honor their moms, listen to them, meet their needs.

We're called upon to honor one another as believers in Christ. We're to help each other. We're to listen to one another we're to show love and respect to each other.

The fourth group is younger women. This is the second grouping that has additional comments. They are to be treated as sisters with absolute purity. Some translations and paraphrases illuminate: "thinking only pure thoughts about them" (Living), "with perfect propriety" (Moffatt), "as sisters and no more" (Phillips). Don't view them as objects. Don't lust after them. We wouldn't after our physical family sister.

In much of ancient society, women were treated as property. Even today there are cultures and belief systems around the world and in segments of the United States where that attitude prevails. Christians aren't to act that way but understand men and women are created in the image of God and deserve equal respect.

The longest section in chapter 5 concerns a group of which women weren't seeking to join - widows. The ancient world could be harsh on women, particularly widows. A widow could be a woman whose husband died or she'd been divorced or abandoned. Compounding the situation was the husband's property and assets would pass to his children, bypassing the widow. Women had few options. Widows didn't have the advantage of child support, alimony, government assistance. Jobs were scarce for women. A widow could return to her father's house, if he was still alive, depend upon charity, or prostitution.

respect for widows. 3-16

Widows need shelter, money and basic needs to be met. Two methods provide assistance for widows. The first involves relatives, especially relatives who are Christian. The family is to provide the primary support.

The main reasons for Christians to care for their widowed moms, and we could add dads, is because our parents gave us life and caring for them pleases God. Those are two pretty good reasons. The motivation is to put our religion our faith in Christ into practice (James 1:27).

V. 8 gives a dire warning: if mom, grandma or other relative isn't cared for, the Christian denies the faith. He or she isn't living according to what is professed and is worse than an unbeliever who through his actions demonstrates he has better morals and more kindness. Most unbelievers have affection for their family.

Christians are to care for widows to whom they're related. It can be done different ways. Help them stay in their homes. Welcome them into providers' homes. Some help from long distance and phone calls at all times of the day or night, make trips to care for various details as Jean and I did.

The second way is the church is charged with caring for widows who don't have families to provide for them. While the church should love on all widows, they have a special responsibility for this group. The church likely doesn't have the financial or other resources to care for all.

Vv. 5 and 16 tell us some widows are in need. They're left alone and put their hope in God to ask him for help. The church becomes the hands of God in answer to her prayers. The existence of various government assistance programs doesn't negate the church's responsibility. Even if the widow doesn't have monetary needs,

the church can provide avenues of support - connections to help alleviate loneliness, protection from those who try to take advantage of them, available help especially when something goes wrong.

Several qualifications for these widows are provided. The first is they are to be at least 60 years young. Remarriage was less likely. The woman was likely to be mature in the faith. She'd have the track record which enabled her to teach and counsel young women. More on the age requirement in a moment.

The second is she's demonstrated herself to be a sincere follower of Christ. She's been faithful to her husband. She demonstrated moral integrity through marital faithfulness and commitment. She excelled in good deeds as shown by the dual reference in v. 10. Good deeds would include raising her children, being hospitable, and serving the saints who face trouble or need to be refreshed.

There's another group of widows whom the church should help in a different manner. These are the younger ones referenced in vv. 11 through 15 who are able to have children. They should be encouraged to marry, have children and manage their homes. Obviously, this counsel isn't given in in the early stages of grief and mourning ala at the funeral ("there are other fish in the sea").

A married couple on a golf course talked about what would happen if one of them died. They both told the other they should remarry. The wife said she couldn't do that. The husband encouraged her, "He could use my golf clubs." This was a huge deal as the guy really loved his clubs and didn't let anyone borrow them. She was hesitant. He insisted, "Go ahead. It won't be a big deal. I sure won't need them." The wife finally said, "No, that's okay. He's left-handed." Her husband wasn't dead and she was already thinking about moving on.

There are practical reasons to encourage a younger widow to marry. One is to avoid judgment (v. 12). She may intend to not remarry and dedicate her life to serve Christ. Then "he" comes along, turns her head and heart. A flame has been lit. The wording "sensual desires" should be understood as natural normal desires which include physical attraction and the desire to get married. Normally, not an issue. It's different when the woman's devotion to Christ led to a commitment of service to Him probably through some avenue provided by the church. The woman breaks her promise to the Lord because she has a strong desire to get married.

The result is judgment. Some translations have condemnation or damnation which sound like judgment of the eternal variety. Most commentators say the idea is guilt and judgment in the form of discipline. It could be loss of reputation, no longer receiving help from the church and other forms of correction.

There are other reasons for the church not to assist young widows. If their financial needs are met, they could succumb to living for pleasure and luxury. They become materialistic, lazy, and engage in gossip. "Saying things they ought not" could include false teaching as they may have opened themselves to false teachers. They're physically alive but dead to spiritual matters. They've opened the church to slander and some have even turned away to follow the devil.

respect for elders. 17- 23

This brings us back to the group mentioned in chapter 3 as the overseer. It's clergy and lay elders. They're to be treated with honor, respect, financial support for those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Respect is also shown by how elders are treated when accusations of wrongdoing are made. These principles apply to everyone, yet elders are singled out as Satan likes to attack spiritual leaders. People in leadership are especially vulnerable to false accusations. Accusations are only to be considered if there are two or three witnesses. We live in a world where rumor and gossip are often taken for rock solid fact. Anyone else think of social media? Post something about someone and bam, it's gospel. It's easy to smear and harm someone's reputation. Caution to not prejudge and jump to conclusions.

How can we handle rumor and gossip? Don't listen to it. Shut it down right away. Ask the person who's telling the story if they checked with the person whether what is being said is truthful. Check with the person ourselves: "I heard this story. It doesn't sound like you."

If the accusations of sin are found to be true, the person is to be corrected. There's to be a public rebuke since the situation seems to be public. Those who persist in sin are to be rebuked publicly. The opening words of the chapter provide the tone and manner in which it is to be done - not harsh but gentle.

There's a brief interlude before the topic of sins resumes in v. 24. Some sins are obvious while others are hidden and take time to be discovered. This fits with the command to not be hasty in the laying on of hands or putting people into spiritual leadership. Don't rush into elevating someone. Make sure they're tested and worthy. Wrong reasons for choosing church leaders are appearance, friendship, personality, wealth, charisma, popularity, business success or the need to have a certain kind of person. Take time. Be patient. Don't be desperate. You don't want to share in someone else's sins.

Being hasty in the laying on of hands could also be rushing to judgment and rebuking. Don't resort to violence in throwing somebody out of the fellowship. Don't lose control of your emotions and actions so you sin. It can also apply to restoring a person too quickly where the person hasn't fully demonstrated repentance. It could be motivated by pity as the person seems so sad but it would prevent the person from fully dealing with the issue. In this way we're joining in them continuing in their sin.

V. 21 states to carry out the instructions without partiality or favoritism. This applies to selecting elders and more precisely to rebuking spiritual leaders. Discipline is to be given out equally whether the person is a close friend or not. Bias or prejudice for or against a person shouldn't affect the action that needs to be taken. respect for masters. 6:1, 2

These verses are translated in various ways: slave, servant, bondservant. One of the most reputable dictionaries on Bible words says the word used is "the common and general word for "servant" frequently indicating subjection without the idea of bondage" (Vine's Dictionary).

Perhaps 1/2 of the Roman Empire was slaves/servants. People became slaves when captured during war, as punishment for crimes, or voluntarily as the only way to get food. Some masters treated their slaves like animals. Others cared for and treated them kindly. Slaves worked in dangerous conditions like stone quarries while others served as teachers, doctors, shopkeepers. Some slaves had almost the same rights as owners and were better off than day laborers. Some existed merely to show off the owner's wealth and did little work.

The NIV Study Bible notes: "Both the OT and NT included regulations for societal situations such as slavery and divorce (Deut 24:1- 4), which were the results of the hardness of hearts (Matt 19:8). Such regulations did not encourage or condone such situations but were divinely-given, practical ways of dealing with the realities of the day... Paul neither condones slavery nor sanctions revolt against masters. Rather, he calls on both slaves and masters to show Christian principles in their relationships and thus to attempt to change the institution from within" (notes Eph 6:5, Col 3:22 - 4:1).

Paul instructed those who found themselves in the position of slave/servant to consider their masters, whoever they were, to be worthy of full respect. It means to give honor and recognize the position.

It could be tough to navigate the waters when a slave and his master attended the same church. The slave may even have been a leader and more spiritually mature. The slave may have been tempted to think he's better than the owner or try to take advantage of the spiritual connection because in the body of Christ there is neither slave nor free, but all are equals in the Lord (1 Cor 7:22; Gal 3:28). Yet when they stepped out of the meeting place doors and resumed the world of work, they as slaves were to be obedient to the master.

Slaves weren't to think they could do less work or less quality work because they shared the bond of Christianity. They weren't to show less respect to a brother in Christ. They were to serve them even better to benefit the fellow believer because they are dear to them because they are family.

We aren't slaves or servants. The closest we have is being employees. We're to show respect to employers and business owners whether they're believers or not. It can be difficult to give respect to those who express anti-God values and live by disgusting societal norms. We aren't to slack off in protest. We need to protect the cause of Christ from slander, dishonor, and disrespect. We're to work hard to make the teaching about God our Savior attractive (Titus 2:10). If those who were sometimes viewed as nothing more than beasts of burden could do that, we can also strive to make the news of Jesus Christ look good to non-believers.

If our boss/employer/supervisor is a Christian we aren't to slack off because he'll cut us some slack because we're fellow believers. We're to work harder to try to improve his situation materially, financially and spiritually. Doing so can bring benefit to God's kingdom. Perhaps it's as simple as enabling the owner to use his resources efficiently and give more to the cause of Christ.

Howard Stein had a retired friend who regularly observed the construction of a shopping mall addition. He was especially impressed by the conscientious operator of a large piece of equipment. The day finally came when he had a chance to tell the worker how much he enjoyed watching his diligent work. The worker looked astonished and replied, "You're not the supervisor?" (Reader's Digest). The guy's response indicated he didn't usually give full respect to the person paying his wages.

It's thought-provoking a verse about our approach to life is tucked into commands given to slaves: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col 3:23, 24). Work with all your heart because your master isn't the person you're serving but the Lord Jesus Christ is.