

Fight the Good Fight
1 Timothy 5:1-16 (Week 14) 02/08/2026
Family Rules

This is my message written prior to being preached. Please excuse the bullet point format and any grammatical mistakes. This is meant to be spoken.

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. (1 Timothy 5:1-16)

Introduction and Review

- I struggled quite bit, trying to figure out how to preach this passage.
- I wasn't sure if it should be 1, 2 or even 3 messages.
- But in the end, I felt it was best to tackle **all 16 verses**.
- **This might be a record for me.** So, settle it, we could be here a while...
- Now, last week we looked at the **final verses of Chapter 4**.
- In **five verses** **Paul gives Timothy 5 specific instructions** for success in ministry.
- Timothy must **set a godly example for the believers**.
- He must **devote himself to the word of God**.
- He must **not neglect his God given spiritual gift**.
- And He must diligently **practice (work hard) and persist (never give up)** in doing these things.
- And so having given these general overarching instructions/principles for success in ministry.
- Paul then, in **chapter 5 verses 1 all the way to chapter 6 verse 2**, gets more specific.
- He instructs Timothy and the church on how they are to relate to **specific groups of people**.
- And as in the rest of the New Testament, it's **very clear in our passage**,
- **that in the church we are to relate as Family**.

- So even before we look at our passage for today,
- I want to drive home the truth that...

The Church is the Family of God

- In the first chapter of his Gospel, John writes...

¹² But to all who did receive him (Jesus Christ), who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, (John 1:12)

- Every believer is a **child of God**, therefore every believer belongs to the same family.
- So, let's think about some of the ways in which **the church is a family**.
- We are the children of God therefore **we all have the same Father**.
- When we say our family prayers, we begin with the words, **Our Father**.
- And all Christians become members of **this family** in the same way.
- To the **Ephesians** Paul explains...

⁴ ...In love ⁵ [God the Father] predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, (Ephesians 1:4-5)

- We were all predestined for **adoption as sons through Jesus Christ**.
- **We have all been adopted into the family of God**.
- And once we become members of God's family, we enter into relationship with our Father.
- Who unlike some fathers, is **not distant, absent, or cruel**.
- Just the opposite: **To the Romans**, Paul wrote...

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (Romans 8:14-16)

- As part of our adoption, we receive the Spirit of God.
- The Spirit dwell in the children of God, **and by the Spirit we cry Abba! Father!**
- Abba is the Aramaic word for father and is often used in intimate family settings.
- Our Father, who is in heaven, is all close to all his children.
- And as God's children, we eat around the family dinner table at **the Lord's Supper**.
- We even plan to attend the same family reunion in heaven.
- And so, the fact that God **has made us** his children through Jesus Christ,
- Means that **the church is the Christian's first family**.
- **I know this is radical but**, in many ways, your Christian brothers and sisters should take precedence even over **your own biological family**.
- Blood may well be **thicker than water**, but the **Spirit is thicker than blood**.

- Consider the example of **Jesus Christ**, when he was teaching in a house in **Galilee**...

³¹ And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³² And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” ³³ And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:31-35)

- Now, this doesn't mean that Jesus didn't care for his biological family,
- if you remember at the cross, he made sure his Mother Mary would be taken care of.
- The point is, that Jesus emphasizes the importance of your spiritual family,
- at times even above your biological family.
- Also, Paul clearly understood that the church was the **family of God**.
- It seems, as you read through his letters in the New Testament,
- that the apostle had the largest extended family in **the Roman world**.
- He was forever mentioning brothers like Quar-tus and Sos-thenes,
- or sisters like Phoebe and Ap-phia.
- In fact, there are more than one hundred references to brothers and sisters in his letters.
- And 1 Timothy is no exception.
- It contains numerous family references.
- Paul addresses the letter...

² To Timothy, my true child in the faith... (1 Timothy 1:2)

- And throughout the letter the Ephesians are referred to as **his “brothers”**
- The church itself is called...

¹⁵ ...the household of God... (1 Timothy 3:14)

- All this to say, according to the NT, the church is not just like a family; **it is a family**.
- And the thing that Paul wants Timothy to understand is that **every good family** has rules that the members must follow.
- When my kids were teenagers, one important rule in our family was,
- **Mom and Dad must know where you are at all times.**
- And I'm sure **all of you** have rules that govern your families.
- The same is true in **God's Family**, yes there are rules for us as individuals.
- But there are also rules for relating together as God's Children.
- **Family Rules** that must follow.
- **And that's what we find in our passage today**,
- A series of Family Rules for the **Ephesian Church** and **Bridges Church**!
- And that brings us to our passage...

- Where Paul begins with a brief series of...

1. Rules About Treating Family with Respect

- Now how respect in the family is shown, **at least in part**, is based on a person's age and gender.
- And God's Family no exception, Paul writes...

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 Timothy 5:1-2)

- Paul breaks down the family into **four groups of people...**
- Each of which is to be treated differently. **First...**

A. Treat Older Men Like Fathers

- Treating one's elders (male or female) with honor and respect is not simply a **cultural convention; it is the will of God**.
- Now the way we do this may **vary from culture to culture**.
- According to **Old Testament law**, the young should...

³² ...stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man... (Leviticus 19:32)

- In an Asian church, **younger men** obey this principle by **bowing before their elders**.
- **Western Christians**, following our **western culture**, tend not to be as respectful to our elders.
- **But as Christians we must follow the word of God, not our Godless culture.**
- Which means we should give honor, respect to our elders **in any way they can**.
- This is certainly one way that Christians can distinguish ourselves from the culture.
- Because it seems to me that **children today** are no longer being taught to **respect their elders**.
- **Instead**, the focus is on **how special and important the child is**.
- And the result is not only **a lack of respect for elders, but a lack of humility in children**.
- **But in the church, we must be different**, Paul says

¹ Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father,

- That word rebuke literally means “to beat with words”
- Don’t beat an old man with words, instead use encouraging words as you would your father.
- However, this doesn’t mean that **older men** can do as they please.
- I know the saying “**Old Guys Rule**” but that is not **an absolute**.
- Sometimes Pastor Timothy (or any church leader) will need to **correct his elders**.
- We can’t overlook their sins or heresies, **just because they’re old**.
- In fact, Paul has already urged Timoty to

³ ...charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, (1 Timothy 1:3)

- And it is more than likely that these **persons were older men**.
- But even when the correction of an older man is called for,
- it must **not** be done in a disrespectful manner, don't beat them with your words.
- In fact, in his letter to the Ephesians, writing about unity in the family of God,
- and correcting bad doctrine, Paul says...

¹⁵ ...**speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (Ephesians 4:15)**

- In the family of God, we must always, speak the truth in love.
- Therefore, instead of being harsh or disrespectful,
- We should deal with **all believers** (including older men) gently and tactfully.
- And for older men that means treating them as you would your own father.
- Imagine yourself having to correct your Dad, the man who has corrected you throughout your life.
- This should produce a **natural love and humility**.
- And, as with any correction, you should begin with **words of encouragement**.
- Dad, can we talk, you know how much I love and respect you!
- But there's a problem we need to deal with....
- The correction of an older man should be gentle, loving even encouraging.
- **And next Paul says...**

B. Treat Younger Men Like Brothers

- Younger men should be treated with a **different kind of respect**.
- They should not be looked down on (despised) or talked down to.
- Instead, you should treat them **not as a child**, which might be what you expect Paul to say...
- But **as a brother**.
- See the wisdom here!
- At the same time younger men and women are treating older men with deference, **as a father**.
- **older men and women** are treating younger men, **as brothers (equals)**.
- The principle here is **crucial to peace, growth, and unity in the family**.
- It's the responsibility of **older Christians** to bridge the generation gap to younger Christians,
- and not **the other way around**.
- One of the best ways to **help younger Christians become mature** is to treat them with a **measure of equality**.
- To listen to what they say, to remember that they too have the Spirit of God dwelling in them.
- To not despise them (look down on them) for their youth,
- but to respect them as brothers, fellow children of God.

- But there's a danger here for the young.
- Even if older Christians treat you as equals, **you should not think of yourself as equals.**
- Remember they are your **fathers and mothers in the faith.**
- There's a reason Paul makes a distinction between **older and younger.**
- Because it matters.
- We are not the same, **in general** the older one gets the more maturity and wisdom they acquire.
- Therefore, the younger Christian ought to look up to his older brothers and sisters (mothers and fathers) in Christ.
- If we are to function as the family of God...
- Older men and women should treat their juniors with fraternity (as brothers and sisters).
- younger men and women should treat their seniors with humility (as fathers and mothers).
- And that takes us to the Women.

C. Treat Older Women Like Mothers

- As Christians, older or younger, we should all relate to women as respectfully as we relate to men.
- Older women should be treated **like mothers.**
- They should be **loved and listened to.**
- They should be **protected and cared for.**
- There's a **touching example** of this from Paul's own life, when at the end of Romans, he writes...

¹³ **Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.**
(Romans 16:13)

- Clearly **Paul and Rufus' mom** had a loving family relationship.
- **C. S. Lewis** had a similar, if not quite as loving, experience.
- Lewis cared for the mother of his **friend Paddy Moore.**
- The two men had served **together in World War I.**
- And Lewis agreed that if Moore died in combat, **he would look after his mother.**
- Moore was indeed killed during the war, and Lewis held up his end of the bargain.
- By all accounts, Mrs. Moore was a difficult woman to live with,
- but Lewis treated her like his own mother in his own home for **some thirty years.**
- And we too should look treat the older **women of Bridges** like we would our own Mothers.
- **And finally, Paul says...**

D. Treat Younger Women Like Sisters

- Within God's family, men and women ought to display tender affection toward one another,
- the kind of fondness that **a good brother has for a younger sister.**
- But Paul quickly adds a warning: "**in all purity**".
- As close as a relationship between siblings may be, there must not be anything improper about it.

- **Here the concern is frankly sexual:**
- A brother must not compromise his commitment to Christ by having an inappropriate relationship with one of his sisters in Christ.
- Timothy, all ministers, all men, needed to be careful in their relationships with women in the church.
- One practical way for a man to preserve his (and his sisters) purity is to avoid meeting with women completely in private.
- He can have conversations with women before or after church, of course.
- As a Pastor, he can arrange to meet a woman for spiritual counsel at the church,
- **provided someone else is close by.**
- But Men (brothers) should never put themselves in a position where we are alone with a woman.
- **My own rule of thumb is...**
- I will not meet alone with any woman unless she is my wife, my daughter, or old enough to be my mother.
- **Think of the grief the church could have been spared if this one rule had been taken to heart by its leaders!**
- **So, in these first two verses,**
- Paul has given Timothy a set of wise guidelines for treating one another in the family of God.
- How beautiful is the church that treats one another **as fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters.**
- Then, **in verses 3-16**, Paul turns to **the specific case of Widows.**
- **Beginning with...**

2. Rules About Caring for Widows

- From the previous section, we know that widows **being most often Older Women,**
- Would be treated (or cared for) as a mother.
- And this care and the rules governing it is deeply rooted **in Jewish-Christian tradition.**
- **Judeo-Christian Values if you will.**
- In the Old Testament, widows were **accorded extraordinary care and honor.**
- This came right out of the **fifth commandment to...**

¹² “Honor your father and your mother... (Exodus 20:12)

- Biblical (OT) honor included providing financial support,
- as Jesus made so clear when he scolded the Pharisees and teachers of the law...

¹⁰ “For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ ¹¹ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me (FINANCES) is Corban”’ (that is, given to God)— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, (Mark 7:10-12)

- Jesus condemns these men for using God (giving finances to God) as an excuse for not supporting (honoring) their needy parents, which would have certainly included their widowed mothers.
- And God himself **defended widows.**
- Soon after the fifth commandment was given, we read,

²² You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. ²³ If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, (Exodus 22:22-23)

- Deuteronomy also attests that...

¹⁸ [God] executes justice for the fatherless and the widow... (Deuteronomy 10:18)

- And..

²⁸ "At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. ²⁹ And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. (Deuteronomy 14:28-29)

- Clearly God wanted his people to provide for those in need, including widows.
- And so not surprisingly **Jesus had a heart for widows as well.**
- **He raised the son of the widow of Nain** (Luke 7:11-14)
- **He praised the widow's two small copper coins...**

³ he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. (Luke 21:3)

- and, as we already mentioned, **he rebuked those who ducked their family responsibility.**
- So based on the clear teaching in the Old Testament and Jesus' example and words...
- **The early church wholeheartedly accepted the responsibility of caring for widows.**
- **Acts 6** records how **seven godly men** were appointed by **the Apostles** to conduct the daily distribution of food to (Hellenist) Greek speaking widows.
- And the **apostle James** made it ever so clear that...

²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. (James 1:27)

- So, it seems that one of the things that the early church excelled in was care for widows.
- But apparently, **at least in Ephesus** where Timothy was leading the church,
- Caring for widows had gotten **a bit out of control**, too much of a good thing.
- **Too many widows were being funded by the church.**
- And some may not even have been believers, **as we'll see in verse 6.**

- So, Paul instructs Timothy to perform an intervention.
- He gives some tough rules about caring for widows.
- The first of which is...

A. Care is Only for True Widows

- In **verse 3** we read...

³ Honor widows who are truly widows. (1 Timothy 5:3)

- And again, that word **honor includes** the idea of caring for their needs.
- Now what does Paul mean when he writes widows **who are truly widows**.
- **Who are these True widows?**
- Well, that phrase "**truly widows**" appears three times in Paul's instructions.
- (In Verse 3 HERE, 5 and 16)...
- And in verses 5 & 16 we discover what truly being a widow means to Paul.
- In **verse 5** we read...

⁵ She who is truly a widow, left all alone... (1 Timothy 5:5)

- And in **verse 16** we read...

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 Timothy 5:16)

- Paul says a widow is truly a widow when she is left alone, when she has no family to support her.
- Which means that simply being a widow (**losing your husband**) did not qualify a woman to be supported by the church. **And to this Paul adds...**

B. Care is Only for Godly Widows

- Beginning in **verse 5** we read...

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. (1 Timothy 5:5-7)

- A true widow is not just destitute, **but she has set her hope on God**.
- She trusts in God, **she is a true believer**.
- As opposed to the **self-indulgent widow** who is **dead even while she lives**.
- This self-indulgence and being dead even while she lives implies, **she is not even a believer**.
- She is alive **physically but dead spiritually**.
- All this to say, **the church is only to care for true godly Christian widows**.

- And one of the marks of a true godly Christian widow is that ***she continues in supplication and prayers day and night.***
- The widow who qualifies has an intimate relationship with the LORD!
- **She is a prayer warrior.**
- She's like the **elderly prophetess and widow Anna**,
- who Luke tells us, at the time Mary and Joseph presented Jesus at the temple...

³⁷ She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. (Luke 2:37)

- So, the widows who qualified for church support were those who **financially qualified** through being **destitute** and **spiritually qualified** through being godly.
- **And what about those who did not qualify for help?**
- What would happen to them? Well, Paul is clear that their...

C. Care is the Responsibility of Family

- If a widow has biological family, then they are not left alone and they are not (according to Paul) true widows.
- Therefore, these widows were to be taken care of by their **families, as is stated in verse 4:**

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. (1 Timothy 5:4)

- Now this might seem like Paul is saying your **biological family** is more important than your **spiritual family**, which would not really fit with what we saw Jesus say earlier.
- But remember, **Paul is writing to Timothy and the church in Ephesus.**
- So, when he speaks to the children and grandchildren of widows, he is speaking to Christians.
- If the widow's family were all pagans, they would certainly not listen to Paul's instructions.
- So, even though the church is the widow's spiritual family,
- The responsibility for her care goes first to her Christian Children and Grandchildren
- **They are in a sense double family spiritual and biologically.**
- And this, I believe, applies not **just to widows but to all our aging parents and grandparents.**
- The inevitable fact is, **as we age**, a dramatic reversal comes to us all.
- We, who once held our helpless children in our arms and nursed them and provided for their every need will one day be held in their arms as they nurse us at the end of our lives.

- This responsibility **has or will** come to most if not all of us.
- And when we **sons and daughters** fulfill this responsibility, **Paul says we will be...**

making some return to their parents (and grandparents)

- We will be living out the **fifth commandment**, honoring our father and mothers.
- We will be putting our religion (our Faith) into practice.
- And we will receive **God's approval...**

for this is pleasing in the sight of God.

- But if you don't please God by living up to your family responsibility
- Paul then gives this scathing rebuke in verse 8...

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 Timothy 5:8)

- Worse than an unbeliever, **almost all pagans in Roman times did take care of their parents.**
- To do less than an unbeliever denies the faith,
- because it is an act worse than a person **who makes no profession of faith.**
- **So Paul clear about our family responsibilities.**
- Now how should we apply these instructions given to the **first-century church in Ephesus...**
- to the church in the twenty-first century?
- Well, I think **the principles are clear and demanding.**
- **Sons and daughters** are responsible for the care of their widowed mothers and grandmothers...
- And really all helpless relatives, especially those of your own household your immediate family
- Today, despite **Social Security**, retirement benefits, and interest on investments,
- **Christian children are to care for their parents.**
- If financial provision is unneeded, **there is still an obligation for hands-on, loving care.**
- Nurses may be employed, **but there must be more - the care cannot be done by proxy.**
- Emotional neglect and abandonment are not an option for the believer,
- for such conduct is **worse than an unbeliever.**
- AND THEN along with the Christian biological family taking care of their own,
- the church (the spiritual family) must take care of the **true widows**,
- those without family who have no other means and who **put their hope in God.**
- And let me say one final thing before our final point.
- I believe Paul has **provided Timothy and us with basic guidelines** for the care of widows.
- But there may be situations that don't quite fit these rules.
- What about a widow who is a new believer, who is destitute but may not be very godly yet.

- What about a widow who is godly and has “Christian” family members,
- But for whatever reason they are not or cannot provide what she needs.
- What about women in our current culture that were virtually unknown in the first century...
- Christian women and children who’ve been abandoned by their spouses and left without family support.
- Godly single mothers.
- Women whose husbands are in prison.
- These it seems are a new class of "widow."

- In cases like these and others,
- I think that God will give wisdom to Christian family and church leaders about how to apply the principles found in His word.
- And I don’t think **erring on the side of love, care, mercy and generosity** will incur His wrath.

- So, **in verses 3-8** we’ve seen the **Rules about Care for Widows**.
- Now we come to **verses 9-15**.
- Traditionally, these verses have been thought to continue the list of further qualifications for widows who wish to be on **the list to receive financial aid** from the church.

- However, as we will see, if that’s the case then it makes it virtually impossible for a widow to qualify for help unless she has **been saintly for many years**.
- This would leave many destitute and somewhat godly Christian sisters out in the cold.
- SO, it seems to me and others, that **verses 9-15** are better understood as...

3. **Rules About Ministering as a Widow**

- **Verse 9** begins with these words...

9 Let a widow be enrolled if... (1 Timothy 5:9)

- That word **enrolled** is also translated “put on the list”.
- And what I’m saying is that Paul is instructing Timothy to enroll or make a list of widows who qualify to offer service to the church.
- This would probably be a subset of those who are receiving financial assistance from the church.

- And as we’ll see the qualifications to get on this list are quite **stringent**,
- and therefore, naturally point to spiritual service.
- Paul begins with...

A. The Qualifying Widow

- In verses 9 & 10 we **find three basic qualifications**.
- Beginning in **verse 9** we read...

⁹ Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age... (1 Timothy 5:9-10)

- **First**, a widow must be **sixty years old or older**, why 60?
- **Well, this** was **culturally recognized** as the age **of retirement**,
- as well as the age when **remarriage was unlikely**.
- It was an **ideal age** for a widow to commit herself to **singleness and ministry**.
- **Second** a widow must have been faithful...

the wife of one husband (literally a one-man woman)

- As we talked about with elders, this doesn't mean that she was only ever married to one man.
- She could have been a younger widow who got remarried and was widowed again.
- It means that in her married life there was no infidelity, only love and care for her husband.
- And **then third**, her life must be characterized by good works.

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.

- Here "good works" are described in five ways...
- 1) "She has brought up children," – she was a faithful mother.
- 2) "She has shown hospitality," – she opened her home to others.
- 3) "She has washed the feet of the saints," – she has served in all humility.
- 4) "She has cared for the afflicted" – she helps those in trouble and in need.
- and 5) "She has devoted herself to every good work" – she is a model of hard work and service to her family, her community, and her church.
- WOW, what a woman!
- This is the kind of woman that Paul says should be enrolled,
- Put her on the list for spiritual service in the church. **She Qualifies!**
- And **then Paul turns to...**

B. The Disqualified Widow

- Beginning in **verse 11** we read...

¹¹ But refuse to enroll younger widows,

- So younger windows (those under 60) did not qualify.
- Why?

for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry ¹² and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith.

- Apparently, part of the reason for not letting younger women enroll...
- was that enrollment included a difficult pledge not to marry,
- but instead to dedicate themselves to serving Christ.
- And breaking this pledge is equated with being drawn away from Christ,
- and incurring condemnation for abandoning their faith.
- Which implies that the main temptation these young women faced was breaking the pledge by abandoning their faith **to Marry a non-believer**.
- In fact, it seems that this had already happened because **verse 15 tells us...**

¹⁵ For some have already strayed after Satan.

- So, there's the real issue of younger widows being drawn away from Christ,
- possibly by marrying unbelievers.
- And so, to protect the church (and the widows) they do not qualify for ministry.
- Paul then adds...

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.

- Apparently being supported by the church resulted in these widows having **too much time on their hands**.
- Which led to trouble, they became idlers, doing nothing productive,
- going from house to house gossiping and being busybodies, **saying what they should not**.
- And so, Paul gives this final advice...

¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. (1 Timothy 5:11-15)

- Younger widows, Paul says, should get married again, have kids, manage households.
- And that certainly means they should marry a godly Christian man as opposed to an unbeliever.
- Their engagement in a new family would help them stay out of trouble,
- so the adversary (human or demonic) has no reason to use them to slander the church.
- And as with the previous verses, I believe what Paul is giving here are basic guidelines for allowing a widow to minister in the church.
- There may be exceptions, there may be specific circumstances that are not addressed.
- But these verses provide a framework for both caring for widows and calling widows to ministry in the church.
- **SO, we made it through all 16 verses!**

- And it's my hope and prayer that whether you are older, younger, male, female, a widow or not.
- That God has used these practical, and sometimes difficult, words to speak to and give application to your specific situation.
- For me, as a church leader, I learned much about what it means and what it doesn't mean to care for the widows of Bridges.
- As an Older Man, I learned the importance of treating younger men and women in the church like brothers and sisters as equals.
- And as a biological son of two RAPIDLY aging parents,
- I learned that I've got a lot of work ahead of me.
- But that work, whatever it might be **is pleasing in the sight of God.**
- So, I would encourage you this week to reflect on this passage,
- maybe look at the discussion questions.
- One of which is this...
- What areas of Family Life (both biological and spiritual) do you need to grow in?
- And then call upon the Lord to help you, to strengthen and empower you by His Spirit to follow His Family Rules.
- For like all the rules we find in Scripture, these are not given that we might earn our salvation.
- They are given to those who have been saved by grace through faith.
- That we might do the good works that our God and savior has prepared for us,
- That we might glorify him by showing this fallen world his grace, love and mercy.
- **Would you, my family in Christ, join me in Prayer!**