



“Practical Instruction...”

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Chapter 5

1 Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger as sisters, with all purity.3 Honor

widows who are really widows. 4 But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. 5 Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. 7 And these things command, that they may be blameless. 8 But 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. 9 Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, 10 well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. 11 But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, 12 having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. 13 And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. 14 Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15 For some have already turned aside after Satan. 16 If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. 20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. 21 I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. 22 Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. 23 No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. 24 Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. 25 Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

So often the practice of our faith in the current age has essentially become a philosophy...a belief system...an “ideology” more than a genuine and practical way of life. Somewhere we have lost the simple fact that Christianity is supposed to be a life system...a manner and conduct of living. Paul left off the last time we were together with “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” With no “chapter break” in the original, Paul moved seamlessly on to dealing with some of the practical doctrines for which he refers.

5:1

The NKJ uses the term “older man” while the old King James Version uses the term “elder.” (gr) The term “elder” can mean both an older person as well as the position of elder within the church government. If we look at the context it would seem in this case that Paul is using elder in the context of an “older man.”

We can become a little confused on this issue, as we find elsewhere that scripture actually *calls* us to rebuke, including in Paul's second letter to Timothy and the letter to Titus. But the original word found only here speaks of a much greater and severe action than the word we find used elsewhere. “Rebuke” here encompasses the idea of a very severe form of verbal attack. It is not talking about correction or calling out someone concerning sin in their lives. We are herein told to not rebuke an older person in such a severe manner. We are rather to look upon such an individual as a father.

If an older man in the fellowship is to be corrected, he is, if at all possible, to be approached, exhorted, appealed to and pleaded with, just as we would our earthly father. Sadly it seems that in most churches the older folks have the least servant hearts and are the most “out of the loop.” So often it seems that the older one gets, the less effort there is to have an understanding of the church dynamic, its mission, its priorities, and to play a part in such. I do not mean that as scolding, but rather as an encouragement for those of age to step up and lead a generation of younger men and women in the practice of faithful Christ centered living. This, folks, is your call, your mission!

And then we are to look upon the younger men, not as someone beneath us, but as equals...as “brothers.” In both cases, the thrust behind it all is the idea of respect and honor. Both groups are deserving of such. We are a community... a family, and thus should be so treated!

5:2

Paul goes on to call upon us to look at the older women amongst us as “mothers”; with respect and honor. We are to treat younger women here as our own sisters; with “purity” in our action and our motives concerning them. We are to practice an air of protection. Gentlemen, we need to interact with the young women here like we are their big brothers. I have seen this in practice and I am proud of you for it!

Sadly, for many young men today, church can be treated like a Christian “bar-scene” where a believer goes to search out a date or even a wife. Certainly many have found their mate here, but that is not our purpose nor is it to be yours. Therefore, if you are so inclined, I will warn you that the “big brothers” that *are* here can smell that a mile away and will pull you aside and have a discussion with you...

5:3-6

Here we are given instruction on how to deal with widows within the church body. Paul says such honor is to be bestowed upon those that are widows “indeed”; meaning, those who have not only lost their husbands, but have essentially lost everything. Paul is quick to call upon the extended family members to care for those within their family who have lost their husbands and are now alone. If she has family, *they* are to care for and support her.

NOTE: Paul is never one to shuck responsibility or to avoid teaching such to believers. The fact is, there IS responsibilities that exists within the faith! It “comes with the territory.” Despite the modern view of Christianity today... one where it’s all about me and my feelings, Paul, *as well as scripture as a whole*, teaches in rather specific terms these “responsibilities” in our Christian living. Despite all the modern attempts, we do not get to ignore them nor are we allowed to simply “re-invent” the faith in a form that is more palatable and agreeable to our lifestyle! We live in a world where something is true because we believe it...and such a premise has crept into the church too. This is a work of fiction, and one with less than a “Cinderella” ending! We are called rather to believe in what is true. Our “beliefs” don’t change the facts!

A widow who is truly alone is to be helped and assisted by the church community as much as they are able. Yet let us make note that such a widow still is under a criteria for such assistance. Such is to be one who lives a life of practical and visible trust in God and who is a “prayer warrior” for the faith community of which she is a part. If she is instead seeking for and living in the pleasures of life... whether sexually, materialistically, or some other fashion, then she is to be excluded from the mandate of such community care.

5:7

Paul calls upon these instructions to be “commanded.” Again, we tend to see scripture as a nice book of suggestions or idyllic goals rather than the description...*the practice*, of a faithful reborn life.

5:8

Paul ‘throws down’ here with a very strong exhortation toward those within the body of Christ. It is a call that many still ignore and for which many seek to find an exemption. The fact is, we are to be working people whenever physically possible so as to provide for our families. We are not to lazily sit around letting the other members of our house go hungry and without the necessities of life, nor shift the work load and responsibility to others.

How often a “I can’t find a job” really becomes an “I don’t want a job” or at least not *that* one, for it is “beneath me.” Our society has become one ruled by inexplicable pride and self-entitlement, wherein I believe that I am owed something or deserve something.

Very often the church is visited by folks who come looking for a material or financial handout. We as a community *can* and often *do* help in legitimate needs and dire circumstances, especially and primarily for those within the faith community: “*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*” Gal 6:10

However, God’s normal way of providing for people’s needs is through the sweat of their own hard work. “*Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life.*” Gen 3:17. For those who are unwilling, Paul says they are “worse than an unbeliever.” That’s a serious statement! Therefore, I don’t know how anyone could still be ambivalent or confused in this issue.

The bottom line that Paul is warning the church community must not practice man’s definition of ‘love’ and ‘charity’ to enable people to be idle. That is not love. That is hurt. The fact is, there will always be a lot of folks who really don’t want to be a part of a specific Christian community. They are ‘customers,’ ...not co-workers. They will come here to get what they can for free, and go down the street to get what they can from the next church for free.

That is not participation and commitment to community. That is religious ‘snacking.’ Such folks will inevitably also ‘snack’ on the church’s doctrine...consuming what is sweet, and spitting out what they do not want.

5:9-16

Paul continues on concerning the specific issue of “widows,” giving further instructions on what assistance to such should look like within the church body. Paul lays out some stringent criteria for who would receive assistance from the church. Please note that there IS a criterion, just as there is for us as a church when we help *anyone*. We herein have a biblical precedent.

Concerning widows, one must be at least 60 years old, married once, known for her good works and for her selfless living. Such “good works” and faithful living will be evident to all, because good works and faithful living are always evident to all!

Such overt “help” often has proven to be a great detriment by only increasing an attitude of self-entitlement, and causing laziness, continual poor financial management, and personality issues like gossip, loose talk, and involvement in weird doctrinal issues. “Love like Jesus.” That is the directive. Not love like a social service organization.

Maybe all of this is now generating your thinking “*well, show me my man and we will get hitched and pursue that road...*” But I will ask as I have in the past...are you ready to marry? How is your track record as a single?

Are you a godly woman for which godly men would deem desirable? Are you ready...so overflowing with Christ and stability that you are now ready to *give* out some of that? Or is your life erratic and chaotic? How is your example in living? Do you pay attention to your health? Your mental health? Your finances? Your child-rearing if you have one? Your devotional life and service life? Are you choosing someone who is simply *available*, or someone God has led you to to share your life and your love?

Often solo women...and yes young single guys also, are not busy enough or focused enough to remain on a steady path. They are in “waiting” mode as if someone to marry them is going to fall out of the sky. And sadly, some actually do but it is more often a case of falling out of the internet. Good thing God has apps huh?

5:17-18

This verse is in reference to the care, respect, and financial compensation of the “elders who labor in the word and doctrine.” The use of the word “elder” here, is this time in the context of the church service position of “elder.” And moreover particularly concerning pastors; those who are teaching and ruling within the church.

Paul has already stated that if a widow is deserving, that the church was to give her “honor”, or financial support. Paul is claiming that if a widow is to supported as such, then the pastor is “doubly” worthy, as he is laboring to bring the word and doctrine to the sheep.

It is true that some churches poorly treat their pastors, even in the area of care and finances. But no pastor however should be in this for a paycheck. This is not a job or even a career. It is a calling and a mission. I know it bothers some folks that a pastor is paid at all. But usually that attitude comes from those who really have no concept what we as pastors do, especially in this church. (Pastor Justin says I’m not a pastor I’m a CEO.) It’s not like I work one day a week and play golf the rest of the time. Anyone who has spent time in the office level around here knows it can be very intense up there.

Having said that however, I do believe a lot of pastors are indeed overpaid. While looking into this matter a few years back, we were shocked to hear what some country churches were paying their pastors! I feel a pastor should live in the same fashion as his flock.

I am not unaware however of how blessed I am to do this work every day and actually get paid for it! I am thrilled to be in the full-time service of God and feel there is nothing more important or valuable for me to do. But make no mistake...it is **hard**. And it is incredibly stressful. My health has paid dearly for this job. And again, many folks just don’t get that.

I have been asked by some: “what can I do for you pastor?” And my answer is be patient, give understanding, join me in the battle, and pray for me.

5:19

You can just go ahead and mark this in your Bible as one of the most abused and ignored passages in scripture. It’s not just that this instruction is ignored, but chronically abused! For many, church leaders are a favorite target for slander and attack. Most often we are an easy target...someone to blame, presumed to be at fault and are generally “guilty until proven innocent.” This no doubt occurs because in America it is one of our national pastimes to see the “mighty fall.” We love it. When it happens it makes us feel better about ourselves.

I have ‘heard it all’ through the years of ministry. Not just aimed at me, but at other pastors I know. Now agreed, some pastors have been bad guys and have done bad things. I am not saying that should be ignored!

But how about we just follow the scriptural protocol? Accusations must only be entertained “in the presence of two or three witnesses.” That means the person accusing was *actually there* and *they saw* whatever it was actually go down. That does not include anonymous letters slipped under the door, or unsigned emails.

5:20

Paul however states here that if an elder or pastor *does* fail in the account of his life, he should be made an example.

5:21

Paul says “I charge.” That’s some strong language! It seems Paul wants to be sure that these instructions are carried out. Some of these things presented here in this chapter are often ignored, but they were not passing thoughts from Paul, but rather solemn directives before God.

We are instructed to keep an air of equality within the body. In all things, in both blessing and correction. We are family...a community! How often people are upset or angered because they were corrected by a member of the ministerial team. Welcome to the family! We need to “man up” on this! This isn’t ‘the world’ in here. We are expected to different and to be better.

My policy has always been one of openness. Like historical scripture, I think we must not be afraid to deal with our “dirty laundry.” If this is not for you, or you can’t take that, then you are not up for belonging to a true Christian community! And that means this one!

When we have had to deal with very difficult issues, we often bring it before the covenant community. Not necessarily to the church attendees, but to the covenant community...those who have a stake in this place. Then there is no gossip or whispers. Only respect and unity.

5:22

This is an important issue with us. Some churches ambush you on your first Sunday visit to serve or do something in the church. But that is not us. We make every attempt to not be in a rush to put people into positions around here. When this directive is ignored, it can have some dire consequences!

Paul has already earlier given instructions in this letter concerning the parameters of choosing leadership. But this must also be adhered to when allowing anyone to be in *any* area of service. People can do a lot of things with wrong motives. We are trying very hard to not let someone’s service or position here outpace their spiritual state of growth.

We are called to give ample time for people’s character and attributes to manifest themselves before we confirm our support and recognition upon an individual. I have failed in this in the past, and I have in turn paid the price. It gets real ugly when a child gets a badge. Paul didn’t allow it, and neither should we. You want to serve around here? Be patient, and get into the community. It will happen quite naturally.

5:23

Despite the misuse of this verse, this is not the end-all-permission for everyone to go out and buy a bottle of Jack Daniels! While the Bible itself does not give a blanket prohibition of the consumption of alcohol, this is not the “proof text” that many wish it to be.

Paul was instructing Timothy to use a little wine (note carefully use of language) “for his stomach.” Not for his pressures or anxieties, or for a “good time buzz.”

What exactly was wrong here with Timothy we just don't know. I know this job has played heck with my stomach most of the time! Paul has already told us elsewhere that just because something is not prohibited doesn't mean it's always a good idea! We all know that alcohol abuse in this world has ravaged families and even nations.

The use of alcohol is something that should be individually considered carefully before God, and each one of us led by the Holy Spirit. The bible does warn concerning "strong drink." For many folks, it is just a flat out "no" because they can't do it without addiction issues and legal consequences, so for them it is no longer a debate. For the rest of us, maybe it should be...

5:24-25

This verse is likely a continued thought from verse 22. When dealing with positions and titles, time is a very good friend. For some men's sins are easily and quickly identified. But others are often hidden and do not reveal themselves for a long period of time, *if ever*. (in this life)

The same occurs in the area of "good works." Often, a person can be a great servant of God, but is very low key and private about it and few people ever take notice. But rest assured, GOD takes notice! While good works are generally revealed in time, once again sin can often be hidden for a lifetime. Thus the warning is to be careful.

I have used the example before: Some people are like the forgotten and hidden landmines that are found occasionally in war-scarred countries. They can sit there undisturbed for years and years until one day someone finally accidentally stumbles across it and it blows up and takes innocent people with it. That's what is waiting when a leader is not adequately and timely vetted.