

1 TIMOTHY

January 8, 2023

1 Timothy 5:1-2

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

“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”

Young Timothy, apparently averse to conflict and already dealing with a plethora of issues within the young church he has been called to pastor is instructed by God through Paul in how to handle generational and practical issues within the body. A healthy church consists of both men and women, young and old, families and single adults, covenanted together for the glory of God in a local community...and thus for their own good and for the good of their community.

The young pastor here (likely in his thirties) had already been instructed what to do with the heretics who ignored his leadership within the body and were cultivating division with false teachings. He had been given details on how to ensure the right men were serving as elders within the church and how to select the qualified men as servants, as deacons for the body. He then was encouraged to not listen to the lies of the enemy who consistently told him that his age was the reason he was failing as a leader. Paul, his mentor and pastor guided him with insight and instructions for leading well, shepherding with compassion, and protecting the flock, the family of God, from false teachings, heresies, and worthless discussions.

Now, the practical details are here for the pastor/elder as it relates to the generational diversity within the church and the numerous expectations of all who were members. This was not a one-generation church.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Ti 5:1–2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

A church full of young people only may have energy and ideas, culturally relevant language, popular music and may be able to connect with younger generations easier, but will not have the wisdom of the ages, and may not have funding for ministry, or doctrinal integrity related to the things that must not change.

A church full of older people only may have experience, understanding, money, and generosity of giving and support of ministry, but may be more comfortable and risk averse, avoiding change, and not have the energy needed or understanding required to fulfill their calling.

Thus, the generationally identical church is unhealthy and temporal.

Sometime in the mid-twentieth century titles for generations began to develop as businesses and cultural leaders sought to market distinctively and better understand the shifts in beliefs and desires.

Thus, you have Builders, Greatest, Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Y, Gen Z, Gen Next, Gen Alpha, and many more. Depending on what you read, the names of the generations change and the dates shift. It is a market-driven attempt to pigeon-hole individuals into collective groups mostly for profit. To be fair, there are generational differences and generational identifiers. There always have been, even before the development of market-focused strategic definitions of people.

In the first century there were two primary age groups—children and adults. The concept of adolescence or teenagers is something that came about in the twentieth century following industrialization, global wars, and child-labor laws. But...you aren't here for a history of anthropology.

LOVE OTHERS INTENTIONALLY

The greatest commandment was given in the Old Testament, then echoed by Christ in the New and given clarity by Jesus himself.

When asked what the greatest commandment was, by those seeking to trap Jesus in misstating scripture, he responded.

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” ²

Clear. Straight-forward. Right. Love God with all you are and love others as yourself. Love – agape – selfless, permanent, unconditional love as God loves.

So, young Timothy who apparently had been berated by older people in the church due to his young age likely would love to stand firmly on the scripture and loudly put some of these older church members in their place. Right? The curmudgeon in the sanctuary was ripe for correction...and deserved it, but Paul’s instruction is clear, after giving Timothy instructions on godliness in the previous chapter.

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.

The order here regarding gender and age is not random. The structure is clear and fits the patriarchal society. The pattern: 1) older men, 2) younger men, 3) older women, 4) younger women.

Some stop there and lament the positions in the list and wrongly believe that the order is the most important. It offends some and they park here in their anger. That’s an interesting current culture take on a verse that allows for totally missing the point. The order is intentional, but the

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 22:37–40). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

order is not the primary point. The primary point is cautionary instruction and clear teaching given to Timothy (and therefore to us) in crossing generational and gender lines.

If the church is the household of God, which it is, then the instruction given here is clearly affirming of that. The household of God is not about the rooms in a building, but about the relationships between the members of the household...the family.

I remember a song that became popular in church when I was a kid. It was a little more southern gospel and Bill Gaither than ancient tune, but the lyrics are burned into my brain.

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by his blood.
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family,
The family of God.

You will notice we say "brother and sister" 'round here
It's because we're a family and these are so near,
When one has a heartache, we all share the tears
And rejoice in each victory in this family so dear.

From the door of an orphanage to this house of the King
No longer an outcast, a new song I sing
From rags unto riches, from the weak to the strong
I'm not worthy to be here, but praise God I belong.

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by his blood.
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family,
The family of God.

It's definitely a song for an era and a particular style, but the family of God phrase is true and has been since God created his church. But, not every family is healthy. Not every home is loving. Not every relationship is right.

God's church is to be a household of faith by God as evidenced through the scripture, most notably Galatians 6:10.

Galatians 6:10

¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. ³

Within this household, this godly family, there are expectations.

- **Encourage older men as you would a father.** This does not mean that God desires older men to remain steadfast in their ungodliness or in their wrong understanding of truth. It does mean, that as you would correct your own father in love, you are to do the same with older men...older spiritual brothers in Christ...within the church. Godly leadership does not plow others over, but lovingly guides. Understand that these men Paul is speaking of are not heretics, not men like Hymeneus who sought to divide the church, not false teachers, but faithful saints. Every man has a story and no man is truly known until you know his story, so Timothy is instructed to encourage, to shepherd, to care lovingly in respect those who are older. He is not told to abide by wrong instructions or to sacrifice his role as pastor/shepherd to appease anyone, but encourage and respect and honor is here. This is the Old Testament teaching and it remains true today.
- **Encourage younger men as brothers.** Encourage – love – lead – don't ignore and look down upon. Timothy was young, but there were younger men in the church. Those men were to be treated as brothers, not as nuisances, not as junior church members, not as Christians in waiting, but as brothers. They needed encouragement,

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ga 6:10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

leadership, mentoring, and protection. Brothers may pick on each other and laugh at each other and even make fun of each other, but if someone else outside the family does that...it's a different story.

- **Older women as mothers.** Much has been written about the cultural patriarchy of the first century and even throughout church history. Even now, there is a swell of teaching among evangelicalism pushing for egalitarian pastoral leadership – for men and women to hold the office. Thus, due to the divide that has been in place regarding gender and the effectiveness of our enemy to use that divide within the church to his advantage, often teachings of Paul regarding women are viewed with tainted eyes. Yet, I see this, and the entirety of scripture as God-breathed, inerrant, and immutable and worthy of reading, studying, teaching, and abiding by. Therefore, older women within the church are to be cared for as one would rightfully care for his or her mother, with love, understanding, protection, and holiness. Older women are not to be shelved away into the last Sunday school room before heaven, forgotten and ignored.
- **Younger women as sisters.** In a healthy family unit with sons and daughters, the reality is that brothers and sisters can get on each others' nerves and arguments and eternal picking on each other may occur. Despite that, if a bully at school begins picking on the sister, the brother often will show up to set things right. I remember the story in the news in 2021 about Bridger Walker from Cheyenne, Wyoming. Bridger was seven-years-old at the time. His little sister was being attacked by a German Shepherd and Bridger ran to fight the dog and protect her – to save her life. Bridger ended up needing surgery and over 90 stitches in his face. He now has a scar on his face but when asked by his parents if he wanted the scar to go away he said “I don't want it to go all the way away. I was a brother and that's what brothers do. It reminds me of my sister and that she didn't get hurt and that she's okay.”

In a culture that has redefined gender and sex and gender roles that may be an offensive statement, but from a biblical worldview, it is right and good, and dare I say...holy.

Apparently, your fellow members of the church are more family than fellow club members. That is why membership must mean more than it has because in many cases, even here, membership has been so focused on the individual and what the individual can get from the church, that the collective reality of church family is often ignored.

This last little phrase in these opening verses really hit a chord. It is only three words in English but cannot be understated. Timothy, the pastor/shepherd, the spiritual leader of the Ephesian congregation, the family of believers who have covenanted together for God's glory and their good. These men and women, old and young, gathering regularly and sharing resources one with another have a great responsibility to each other and to the Lord.

And how they are to treat one another—in love, true love, not passive, weak, soft, self-serving love, but true love is to be done **IN ALL PURITY.**

LOVE OTHERS PURELY

What if all modern pastors and religious leaders actually led as God instructed Timothy? Let's just talk about our own extended family here. What if Baptist leaders treated older men with respect and encouragement? Pastoral tenure would likely increase. Leadership would be seasoned with love and grace and the annoying phrase "They didn't teach me that in seminary" would be irrelevant as the pastor/shepherd would understand that seminaries are not intended to teach all things.

The loving, respectful, godly older men would be honored well and yes, even old guys could be shepherded by young shepherds.

What about older women? They would be cared for as one would care for mom. Mother's Day wouldn't be about handing flowers to all the women in the building but would be a weekly reality where older women are loved, respected, cared for, and protected. Honor bestowed where honor is required.

Younger men and younger women? All men and women? Brothers and sisters. For real, not just some handed down terminology affirmed in a tune.

Perhaps if that was how men and women in the church were considered, the evils of clergy abuse would never have darkened the doors of our Baptist churches? Perhaps if parking on those three words "**IN ALL PURITY**" (also used in 4:12) would have saved some from lifetimes of trauma and hurt. Perhaps it would have protected the flock. It's not about legalism or pledges or rings or seasonal emphases, but about pastors especially, but also all leaders, deacons, teachers, all church family members living in purity, with hearts that have been transformed, seeing others as image-bearers of value. What if like little Bridger Walker those in the church, especially pastors, would risk their own lives, own position, own personal power, own paycheck, own reputation...for the sake of Christ and the hearts of those called brothers and sisters in Christ. How much pain could be avoided if "in all purity" was how sisters and brothers were loved?

You see, these two little verses to a pastor of a church on the Mediterranean Sea two-thousand years ago resonates today as it has since penned because it is the God-breathed, inerrant, immutable, perfect Word of God and we are to take it to heart. We are to live it out. We are to be the family of God we have been redeemed to be.

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family God. I am glad you are too and pray that we will be the healthiest, holiest, God-honoring family around.