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WORKER



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

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BRETHREN ARE WORTHY OF HONOR

John Baker

Every Christian should give serious thought to how we relate to our brothers and sisters in the Lord, and one approach does NOT fit every situation equally. In the challenging book of 1 Timothy, God deals with roles and relationships in the New Testament church, an entity which He calls His "household" or "family" (1 Tim. 3:15). How can Christians better relate to one another so that God will be glorified and the family of God can be edified? First Timothy 5:1-2 contains one answer. Paul writes to Timothy: "Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity."

1 Timothy 5:1-2 contains two critical verbs: "Do not rebuke" and "exhort." Timothy has just been reminded that his ministry is to command and teach the Word of God so that people will be saved (1 Tim. 4:11, 16). Further, part of Timothy's overall commission in Ephesus was to, "Charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). But 1 Timothy 5:1-2 qualifies the manner in which Timothy is to carry out his mission. The Greek word for "rebuke" in 1 Timothy 5:1 is unusual (occurring only here in the New Testament), and carries the connotation of verbally striking another person. Thus, as he fulfills his ministry of warning, correcting and instructing, Timothy is to take care not to rebuke older men, but rather to exhort them. The Greek word for "exhort" is *parakaleo* which means, "To urge, to encourage, to invite, or to implore earnestly." So Timothy is to make exhortation his standard approach in his relationships with others. Consider how the

exhortation is to be carried out in different situations.

Exhort older men as fathers – As a young man serving the Lord, Timothy needed to be cognizant of how older Christians perceived him. Young people cannot do anything to change the fact that they are young, so God's Word gives practical principles like 1 Tim. 4:12: "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." In like manner, Timothy was taught to approach and teach older men "as fathers." Practically speaking, this implies the following: respect for an older man's wisdom and experience, a

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Editor

Cody Westbrook



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

THE CHURCH AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS

Cody Westbrook

God purposed in eternity to create an entity in which all people would dwell together in unity (Eph. 2:14-18; 3:9-11). It was to be an institution in which race and gender were inconsequential (Gal. 3:28). Members were meant to work together (Phil. 1:27), suffer together (Phil. 1:28), grow together (Eph. 4:15), and glorify God together (Rom. 15:5-6). This great Divine institution is the church of our Lord Jesus Christ—purchased at Calvary (Acts 20:28) and ushered into existence on the first Pentecost following His ascension (Acts 2). The church is the body of those who have been called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14) to come out of the world and be God’s people (1 Pet. 2:9). This call is extended to everyone (2 Pet. 3:9) and that is one of the many characteristics that make the church so unique. The church is composed of individuals from all walks of life. Different skin colors, different languages, different cultures and backgrounds are all found within the body of Christ. All those who obey the gospel (Rom. 1:16; Eph. 4:4-6; etc.) are added by the Father (Acts 2:47) and dwell together in love as brothers and sisters in Christ—members of the family of God (1 Pet. 3:8-9; 1 John 3:1; Eph. 1:5).

Paul wrote about this relationship in one of the key passages of 1 Timothy—

But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

Ephesians 5:1 says, “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.” Being a child of God is a privilege that carries with it certain responsibilities. We are to imitate our Father and strive to be like Him in

all things (cf. Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:16). This was also Paul’s concern for Timothy and his work as a gospel preacher in Ephesus. The church is the house of God and as such there is a certain pattern of behavior that is demanded. Thus far the book has addressed God’s requirements of His house pertaining to doctrine (Ch. 1), worship (Ch. 2), leadership (Ch. 3) and priorities (Ch. 4). Chapter 5 gives attention to the church and its relationships. As has already been mentioned, the church is composed of many different people from many different walks of life— young, old, rich, poor, black, white, and much more. Notwithstanding our differences, we have all obeyed the same gospel and are members of the same body (Gal. 3:26-28). Therefore we are brothers and sisters in the family of God and as such we are obligated to treat one another with a certain level of respect and dignity.

The chapter begins with general guidelines for all members of the church to follow. Young men have a responsibility to older men, older men have a responsibility to younger men, young women have a responsibility to older women, older women have a responsibility to younger women, and so on (1 Tim. 5:1). The next section deals with widows and their care. Paul instructs the church to “honor widows who are really widows” (1 Tim. 5:3) then proceeds to describe different categories of widows and their care. The third section of the book deals with elders, only this time reference is to those who hold the office of an elder (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-7) as opposed to those who are elderly in general. God’s people are instructed to honor their elders and refuse to hear an improper accusation levied against them (1 Tim. 5:17-24). The final section of the context extends to 1 Timothy 6:1-2 and deals with the relationship between slave and master. Servants were to “count their own masters worthy of

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all honor” (1 Tim. 6:1). They were to be careful not to look down on a master who was also a brother in the Lord but rather to “serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved” (1 Tim. 6:2).

The instruction in this context is only a small sampling of the Bible’s teaching concerning the church and its relationships. James 3:17-18 describes “the wisdom that is from above” and how a person who possesses that wisdom acts as a peacemaker amongst his brethren. Peter wrote, “Likewise you younger people submit yourself to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility...” (1 Pet. 5:5). We are to “be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Rom. 12:10). Galatians 5:13 exhorts,

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Time and again the New Testament emphasizes our need to love, serve, submit, pray for, think about, and care for one another. Though following through with God’s will on the matter is not always easy.

Personality conflicts, misunderstandings, differences of opinion, and such like will always be a reality in the church because the church is composed of people. Such is not a new problem, however. Consider Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2) and the instruction pertaining to matters of opinion in Romans 14 as two examples. Though problems arise periodically, our love for the Lord and for one another pushes us to solve them. We are children of God and not of the world. Therefore, our desire should be to constantly grow in our love for one another and to strengthen the relationships that we possess with all of our brethren in Christ. This edition of the Christian Worker considers 1 Timothy 5 with this goal in mind. May God help us to give attention to the church and its relationships.

CW

WIDOWS ARE WORTHY OF HONOR

1 TIMOTHY 5:3-16

Kerry Clark

*Honour widows that are widows indeed.
But if any widow have children or nephews,*

let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan. If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

It is beyond dispute that women have always occupied a very prominent position in the eyes of God. During the days of the nation of Israel, women were held in a place of honor. Especially considering the value that was placed upon women in other nations; many societies considered women as nothing more than a possession for men. In contrast, the Law of Moses had safeguards in place to protect women. No one can read Proverbs 31 and deny that women in Solomon’s day were held in honor. Notice the opening verse, “The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him” (Pro. 31:1). Read the rest of this great chapter; then explain why

some have said the Old Testament did not elevate the value of women. Under the Law, widows were held in high regard (Ex. 22:22-24; Deut. 24:17-19).

Let's consider Paul's instructions sent to a young preacher named Timothy concerning the treatment of widows. Timothy, of course, knew the value of women. He had been taught from his birth by his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois about living a godly life (2 Tim. 1:5). Beginning in Chapter Five, Paul tells Timothy to treat older ladies as he would treat his mother. Treat younger ladies as your sisters, with all purity (v. 2). In verse three, Paul says to honor widows who are widows indeed. We know that the church in Jerusalem needed instructions on how to care for widows in the early church. Some were being neglected. "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations" (Acts 6:1). Seven men were appointed to care for these needy widows.

Based on Paul's instructions here, it is evident that the church has a responsibility to care for her members who are in need. Christian women held a dear place in the heart of the church in the First Century. No doubt, we also need to honor our widows. Paul introduces us to a "class" of widows who deserved special attention: widows indeed. In fact, Paul mentions five different kinds of widows in this chapter: 1) widows in deed, 2) widows with children who should provide for them, 3) widows who are simply living for this life and not everlasting life, 4) younger widows who should remarry, and 5) widows who have other family members who could provide for them.

What is a widow indeed? Paul will answer this question in subsequent verses. In verse four, Paul places the responsibility of caring for a widow upon her children or grandchildren. It is a sad commentary in our society how little we care for our elderly. David Lloyd-George once said, "The true test of a civilization is the way it treats its old people." Children have an awesome responsibility to provide for their mother. This, of course, includes more than just financial care; godliness demands, kindness, gentleness, patience and love for our mothers. Paul tells us that a widow indeed is one that is truly in need. She is desolate, maybe even having no place to live. Her children should provide for her (verses 3-5).

We recognize then that the widow indeed is

in reality a widow in need. Paul describes her as desolate, having no family to provide for her. In order for the church to accept this responsibility, she needs to be over sixty, having been the wife of one husband, well known for her good works, having raised godly children, having shown hospitality to strangers, cared for fellow Christians, relieved those in need, and followed every good work.

Paul next mentions the widow who has given herself over to the pleasures of the world. The church has no responsibility to care for her as long as she is living an impenitent life. The apostle then addresses younger widows. He encourages her to remarry and rear children. Otherwise, he warns she may forsake the church after finding an ungodly mate, who leads her astray. Even though she might not desire to remarry, she may become idle, running from house to house and carrying gossip at every convenience. Finally, the apostle addresses the widow who has other Christian family that can provide for her. They should take this responsibility seriously and provide for family.

In all of this Paul teaches us that we have responsibility to those widows we know. Additionally Paul does not want the church to become burdened with caring for the needy and forsaking her main responsibility - to preach the Gospel.

CW

ELDERS ARE WORTHY OF HONOR

(1 TIM. 5:17-25)

Troy Spradlin

In many nations around the world, the older members of a community are considered to be a valuable asset. Those with gray hair are seen as symbols of wisdom and are worthy of honor. They are to be dignified and esteemed as one who has precious insight, affirmations, and perspectives into all aspects of life. Sadly, our American culture tends to over emphasize and revere youth far above any senior citizen status. So many of our young people today are allowing their secular and spiritual mindset to be shaped by examples and opinions of other young people. They're drawn to those who can run faster, jump higher, or throw a ball further as the

quintessential authorities and experts on life. They don't seem to recognize, or care, that these people aren't much older than they are themselves. How can those younger possibly have the same level of knowledge and experience that an older person possesses? Well, they simply cannot nor have not!

Christians, on the other hand, are not of this world (John 17:16). His/her citizenship is in heaven, not some worldly culture (Phil. 3:20). We don't live our lives according to the trends and notions of society. Godly culture, as prescribed by the Bible, teaches us that "Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding" (Job 12:12). The implication is the elderly should be respected and treated as useful members of the community. The apostle Paul also wrote, instructing Titus, to enjoin the older women to teach the younger women while at the same time, encouraging him to be an example to the younger men (Titus 2:3-8). In a different letter, he adds that we should not rebuke an older man or woman (1 Tim. 5:1,2). That certainly implies extending a great deal of respect to the aged. Esteeming our elderly is an essential Christian attribute.

Here is why this is so important. Paul carries the principle of respecting our aged brethren one step further by writing, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine," (1 Tim. 5:17). In this verse, he has applied it to the leadership of the church. The word he used for elder is "presbyter," in the original language of the letter. A presbyter can be translated as an elderly person or as one who is presiding in a leadership role. Paul is referring to the latter. These are the shepherds of the flock, the overseers, or the bishops of the church, as they are also known - all of which can be inferred from the phrase, "the elders." Therefore, not only are the elderly to be respected, but among those who lead in the church and do their job well, they are to receive double honor!

Serving as an elder in the Lord's church is one of the greatest privileges any man could ever hope to fulfill. But, just being an older, respected man is not sufficient. There are other, very specific requirements a man must meet before he can serve in that capacity (1 Tim. 3:1-7). They are not merely "suggested qualities" or an "ideal model" for the highest leadership position within the church, as some have claimed. These are qualities "the bishop must **be** [emphasis added]" (1 Tim. 3:2).

In other words, he ought to possess and demonstrate those virtues in all aspects of his life.

Now, let's put all this together. Considering that an elderly man should already be esteemed, that he meets the qualifications of being a presbyter, and that he is able to do that job well, that is a man who is certainly worthy of honor. The phrase, "double honor" here is referring to financial support. If a man is serving in the capacity of an elder and is also working as a preacher and a teacher, then he is eligible to receive wages for his labor. According to the Scriptures, he has a right to remuneration (Deut. 25:4; Luke 10:7).

In the following verse (5:19), Paul repeats the admonishment given in verse one of the chapter, "do not rebuke an older man," but this time, it is in the passive voice, "do not receive an accusation against an elder" He is still referring to the men of leadership, yet now he adds parameters to the warning, "except from two or three witnesses." Why does Paul include this restriction? It is because of the honor and respect that is due an elder. Men of leadership are in a position that is constantly being attacked. Every decision or action from them is subject to, not only criticism coming from the ungodly, secular world, but also from among those within the flock of which they shepherd! Many accusations can and will be trivial, untruthful, and/or baseless. In order to prevent such a burden upon an elder, two or three witnesses are required to substantiate any accusation. If any sinful behavior has been committed by an elder, it will be visibly evident. When that happens, only then must he be rebuked openly, otherwise, leave the man be for God will judge him in the end (1 Tim. 5:20-25).

Elders deserve to be honored and respected, not only because they're older and laboring in the word and doctrine, but because they are watching out for our souls. They will be held responsible for our spiritual well being and must give an account to the Lord for it. That it is an enormous responsibility any man to bear and thus, God expects us to submit to their authority and obey them (Heb. 13:17). Let us esteem all of our aged brethren and let us recognize that those elders which lead our congregations are worthy of honor!

CW

COUNT MASTERS WORTHY OF ALL HONOR

Kevin Cauley

Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things (1 Tim. 6:1-2).

Bondservants (slaves, Greek: doulos) are to count (consider, regard, deem, reckon Greek: hegeomai in the middle/passive voice) masters worthy of all honor. Whether the master (Greek: despotes) is honorable or not is beside the point; the servant is to consider him as such. Why would Paul teach this “so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed”? Is such teaching relevant for us today?

First, God designed Christianity to address all peoples in all places at all times. God offers salvation to everyone, including slaves. This elevates Christianity above other world religions where excluding slaves is common. Christianity, however, teaches equality between slaves and masters both of whom are persons made in the image of God and may equally benefit from the gospel (Gal. 3:28). Were Christianity not to include teaching regarding slavery, some might wrongly construe that God never intended Christianity for slaves. Because the New Testament addresses how slaves and masters are to interrelate, we know that God intended the gospel for slaves, and no person, regardless of their station in life, is excluded from His offer of salvation. He truly wants all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4)!

Second, slavery exemplifies the core values of Christianity. Jesus Christ did not come to earth to be an earthly king, aristocrat, debutante, or elite. He did not come to be served, but to serve (Matt. 20:28). Philippians 2:7 says that Jesus took “the form of a bondservant” (slave, Greek: doulos). Paul, James, Peter, and Jude all refer to themselves as bondservants/slaves of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1, Jas. 1:1, 2 Pet. 1:1, Jude 1). This language has a rich theological history in Judaism going back to the slave who loved his master so much that he would dedicate himself to his service for the rest of

his life (Ex. 21:1-6). Christianity would be inconsistent with its core values to teach slaves to act any different than its Head and early leaders. In this way, the enemies of God and Christ would blaspheme Christianity if slaves did not act consistently with its principles.

Third, Christianity has instruction for how all are to behave regardless their circumstance. While slavery has been outlawed in modern societies, it continues to be a problem in other parts of the world. Supposing a slave came across a copy of the Bible and became a Christian, he would want some instruction on how to live. He would be comforted knowing that God cared enough about Him to address His circumstances. He would be filled with hope knowing that God had given him a plan to follow in order to get to heaven. The New Testament’s teaching about slavery teaches a slave to regard himself as a person who is not worthless, but valuable to God. Moreover, if the slave is valuable to God, no human has the authority to deny such value. The design of such teaching leads to the elimination of slavery in a peaceful way.

It is for these reasons that a slave is to “count their own masters worthy of honor.” Ephesians 6:5-6 expands upon this explanation:

Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

A slave considers himself in service to God and Christ, and, as a Christian, this is the reason he acts the way he does toward his earthly master. The goal that God has for the Christian who is a slave is to convert his master to Christianity. In so doing, the inequalities that exist between slave and master may be addressed peacefully through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ (Col. 4:1). Even if the master does not convert to Christianity, Christ will be glorified through the slave’s behavior. This is Peter’s point in 1 Peter 2:18-21:

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is

commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.

The word “commendable” in this translation comes from the Greek word *xaris* meaning “gracious.” For a servant being treated wrongly, it is an act of grace to be patient and endure grief. Jesus Christ was the personification of grace (John 1:15, 16-17). This means that when the servant so acts, he is exemplifying the person of Jesus in His life. The same would be true of any relationship where one is treated unfairly.

Slavery is a horrible institution, but God uses man’s wickedness to accomplish His purposes. Such are the circumstances of the Christian slave; he is not instructed to rebel or act violently toward his master, but to exemplify the grace of Jesus in the hopes of elevating all relationships in Christ.

CW



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willingness to listen and understand before attempting to be understood, and a careful and gracious approach in speech. Every younger Christian would do well to exhort an older man as if he were a father.

Exhort younger men as brothers – Timothy was a man who sincerely cared for the people with whom

he worked (Phil. 2:20). He was not a hireling, merely putting in hours for a paycheck; rather, his goal was to help people glorify God. In dealing with younger men, Paul commanded Timothy to exhort them as brothers. Scripture indicates that true brotherhood is characterized by friendship, kindness, encouragement and mutual respect (Pro. 18:24; 27:17; 2 Pet. 1:7). Our brothers are not to be counted as enemies, even when disagreements become sharp (Acts 15:36-41; 2 Thess. 3:15). While there IS a time to contend earnestly for the faith, it still is true that anger, malice and strife do not engender close bonds of brotherhood, nor do they produce the righteousness of God (Jas. 1:19-20).

Exhort older women as mothers – How grateful Timothy must have been for the spiritual influence of his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). Surely it would not have been difficult for Timothy to remember the lessons of love, honor and respect that Lois and Eunice instilled in him. Elsewhere Paul wrote that some older women might have a tendency to become, “Slanderers or slaves to much wine,” but young preachers like Timothy and Titus were to teach them to be reverent in behavior (Tit. 2:3). Timothy’s teaching was to be characterized by a son’s gentle exhortation of his mother. Sometimes in the church, older women need to be instructed or corrected. Modern Christians would do well to remember that even though sin must be addressed, we should still relate to older women as we would our own mothers. May it never be said that our personal attitude and demeanor hindered someone from grasping the greatness of the Gospel message.

Exhort younger women as sisters, with all purity – As a young man, Timothy was to be especially careful in how he dealt with younger women. First, Paul said he should treat them as sisters. This implies a recognition of their dignity and worth in the sight of God as well as a commitment to their protection. Second, Paul said that Timothy’s exhortations of younger women should maintain the standard of “all purity.” In his relationships with younger women, Timothy was to be pure and holy in his motives and actions (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

Thank God that He has not only given us His truth, but that He has instructed us about how to properly relate to others as we teach and exhort them. May all of God’s people relate to each other as the family God intended.

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