

1 Timothy 5 • Guidelines for Widows and Elders

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1st Timothy chapter 5. Open your Bibles there, please. 1 Timothy chapter 5. I got through the whole chapter in the first service. I'll see if I can do it in the second service. It's going to depend a little bit on my back. I'm not back up to full strength yet. I still can't taste food or smell things unless they're right up to my nose.

I'm over everything, but that stuff can linger. I've actually heard of some people who've had that particular issue linger for a year. And I'm hoping that's not the case because I really miss chocolate. I mean, chocolate is my friend. And right now, it's kind of being a little persnickety because I can't taste it. Doesn't mean I'm not eating it, but I just can't taste it. Because you know what? I just use my imagination. I love spaghetti. I love pizza. It is a real bummer when you put those things in your mouth and it's like, this is cardboard. I can't taste this. But I'm just imagining how good it is.

So, anyway, enough about me. Let's read through the chapter here. I'm reading out of the ESV. Follow along with me as I do. It says,

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. ¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

²³ (No longer drink only water but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) ²⁴ The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. ²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden."

Let's pray. Father God, open our hearts. This is your Word. We pray for your Holy Spirit to minister that word to our hearts, Lord, give me grace and understanding and help me to clearly share these things and Lord, I just pray for every heart to be open to hear from you, Lord. Speak to us about the areas of our greatest need. We ask it, Father, in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

You know, you can tell from this chapter that this is full of a lot of instruction and kind of, stuff for a young pastor who's leading a church or at least establishing a church and that sort of thing from the Apostle Paul. And even

though you may never be a pastor, or you may never be even in you know, like church leadership or something like that.

These are good things for you to know because you are the body of Christ. You are the recipient of the ministry that comes from individuals like this. And you know, it's always good to go back to the Word and say, what does God expect out of a pastor and leader? Because you know, we've foisted our own expectations on pastors and leaders over the years. You know?

And we've come up with our own expectations. But they're not necessarily biblical. They may not be wrong, but there's not biblical, but we place huge expectations that may or may not be part of their actual calling, you know. So it's good for us to go back and revisit the Word of God and say, you know, what is God's intention for a man who is called into ministry?

And the first two verses of this chapter give instructions to Timothy concerning how he should address individuals in the church who are needing a course correction. That's probably the politest way I can say it. Because sometimes that happens. Now remember Timothy was a younger man. So, what happens when he's dealing with an older man who he recognizes kind of needs a little correction?

Well, as a younger man, that can be an awkward thing to do speaking to your elders, speaking to someone, and there is a need to be respectful about that kind of a conversation. And so he begins in verse one by saying, you know, don't be harsh about the way you speak to an older man when he is needing correction, rather encourage him.

Let him know that, you know, in the work and power of the Spirit, he can do better. And so he has to, the younger pastor should show that kind of respect to an older man. And then he's told, even when it comes to younger men, treat them as brothers. Now, I don't know if you had a brother. I did growing up and I still do.

And he kind of liked to punch me a lot and beat me up and stuff like that. And so whenever I read this verse about treating younger men as brothers, I'm like, well, yeah, but just not like the way my brother, I mean, I love him today and we get along great, and he's a good guy, and he doesn't hit me anymore, which is really nice. I am very happy to say that.

But he did, but you know, today we treat each other with respect and that's what Paul is talking about, even though he's saying here, in essence, you do have a

little more leeway to be a little, perhaps more direct with a younger man, because he's a younger man but still treat him as you would a family member with that kind of compassion and kindness that you would. Now, when it comes to older women now, what about, here's a young pastor who's addressing himself to an older woman again, who's needing a course correction in her life?

There's something going on in her life about which he needs to confront. And yet this is a challenging situation. Paul says, treat her as if you would your own mother. Well, it's a challenge right there, huh? Mom, I need to talk to you a little bit here, you know, and please don't send me to my room until I'm done. But, you know, he needs to respond to her with the respect and honor that an older woman is due.

And then he finally says, when it comes to younger women, treat them as you would if she were your biological sister and with all purity, okay? So, there's a compassion and an understanding that is expected when we're talking to people in the body of Christ and we're to treat them as family members because fundamentally that's what they are.

You are my brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and we're to treat one another with the kind of honor that families extend one to another. Now as we get into verse three and following, he's going to have quite a bit to say, actually here, about widows. And before we get into these verses, I feel like I need to kind of give a little back story because Paul is talking to Timothy who understands how they treated widows and the things they did for widows.

But we may not be aware. So here's the deal. You need to understand that the early church believed that it was their responsibility to take care of women whose husbands had passed on. But, as they got into it and began to do it over a period of time, they realized that not every widow was on the same standing. In other words, they had to come up with guidelines.

And that's what Paul is going to give Timothy in these verses. Guidelines for widows. And you'll notice that he begins by saying, in verse 3, "*Honor widows who are truly widows.*" And that statement sounds dumb on the outset because it's like, what do you mean? It's kind of like being kind of pregnant. You either are or you're not. And when it comes to being a widow, I mean, your husband either passed away or he didn't. So how can you be a truly a widow?

Well, what Paul means, and he's going to repeat it two more times. What he means is truly needy. In other words, truly without any assistance or any help. In other words, she has no family. And I probably should tell you that in that

day and age, because of the fact that culturally, it was very difficult for a woman to support herself, if not impossible. There were instances where widows who had no family, starved to death, okay? So, this was a very real issue.

So the church took these women took it upon themselves to take care of these women. But Paul says, honor the ones who are truly needy. In other words, they have no one. And that's why he goes on to say in verse four, if you look with me there, ⁴“...*but if a widow has children (or perhaps even adult grandchildren) let them first, (and here's the interesting phrase) learn to show Godliness.*”

Guys it's Godliness to take care of your family. It's a show of Godliness to take care of your family members. And so, he says, let them show Godliness in their own household. And then I like this phrase too, “...*and make some return to their parents for this is pleasing in the sight of God.*” You know, our parents, I don't know about your parents, my parents, they're still alive. They poured into me for so many years and now my dad's 94. My mom's 91 and my sibling and I'm, I live 1500 miles away from my parents. The rest of my siblings live pretty close, so they're the ones really kind of taking care.

We've gotten to the point now where my parents need to be taken care of. In fact, we're like in the next week moving them to another location because they've gotten to the point where they just, they need nursing care all the time. My mom, bless her heart, she rolled her mobility chair over her ankle and broke it last week. Yeah, I know. It was just, it's just one of those things, you know, they need care.

It's interesting though. I mean, this is my mom. She used to take care of me. I used to sit in her lap while she comforted me, you know. Well, now we get a chance to return the investment, you know, that our parents have poured into our lives. And this is good. This is good. In fact, Paul says it is pleasing in the sight of God. Okay? And if your parents aren't there yet, praise the Lord, but they'll probably get there unless Jesus comes first. But you know, and when it happens, we are to pour into their lives like they poured into our lives.

Verse five, ⁵“*She who is truly a widow.*” (And again, this is that reference to truly needy, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continue) ⁶“...*continues in supplications and prayers, night and day.*” ⁷“*But she who is self indulgent is dead even while she lives.*” (And then he goes on to say) ⁷“*Command these things (and so forth) so that there won't be any reproach on these sorts of things.*”

And what Paul is doing here...is he's kind of giving us in these verses a spiritual contrast, if you will, between two kinds of widows that he's describing. He calls again, the one, the true widow, the truly needy woman who, lives her life in complete dependence on the Lord. She's constantly praying, waiting on the Lord, trusting the Lord for whatever sustenance and provision that He is going to bring.

And yet then we see this contrast of the other woman who is a widow in the sense that her husband passed, but her heart is not focused on the Lord. It is, in fact, self focused and she is now living a life seeking pleasure rather than the service of the Lord. And Paul says that when somebody lives their life for pleasure and that's it, he says they're dead even while they're alive.

That's a strong statement, isn't it? But did you ever think about the fact that just describes the world? I mean, that really describes pretty much everybody outside of Christ. You know? Because the world knows of no other reason to live except to meet one's needs. That's it. That's all there is, right? And they talk about self-love and self this and self that. Everything is self-oriented. That's the way the world operates.

Well, in the body of Christ, we operate on the basis of being directed or focused on others, rather than self focused. That's the example that Jesus gave us. And it's a sign of life. When somebody lives their lives, "others" focused it's a sign of the life that God has deposited in that person. You know? Yeah, it doesn't mean we don't struggle with self, even as believers, because we do.

We're constantly being drawn back to self. We're constantly being drawn back to thinking about me and my needs and stuff. But we recognize, we know, that in Jesus, He's directing us outward. Right? Again, it's that sign of life. That's why Paul says this woman, and it doesn't have to just be a woman, but this woman who is completely self indulgent is dead even while she lives. Right?

So the point of all this is for Paul to give Timothy some direction as it relates to the church's responsibility. And he's telling us that the church has no responsibility to take care of a widow just because she's a widow if she's living a self-indulgent lifestyle. Does that make sense?

Anyway, he's got some more directives here concerning widows. 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."* You've probably heard this verse all on its own. And I think it can stand all on its own. I really do. I, in other words, I think it can stand outside its context.

The context though, is taking care of widows. That's the context. But I think that it is true that any man who refuses to provide for his household has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. And he says that because even unbelievers take care of their families. Kind of interesting, taking care of family.

Do you remember when Jesus gave us an incredible example of this? You guys remember Jesus was the oldest son. There were other children. Mary and Joseph had other children. But he was the oldest. And there were certain responsibilities that fell to the oldest child. Now remember, by the time Jesus was finishing his earthly ministry, Joseph had passed away. I think he was probably a bit older than Mary. That's a guess, but I think it's a pretty safe guess. Anyway, Jesus took care of his mother. Let me show you a passage from John chapter 19 up on the screen.

John 19:26-27 (ESV)

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Let me remind you of something. Jesus made this statement while hanging on a cross, bearing the sins of the world. He took care of mom. He made sure that mom was going to be okay. Because remember at this particular point, his brothers had not yet come to faith in Him. Now they eventually did. James, His brother, eventually not only came to faith, became the pastor of the church in Jerusalem and wrote a letter in the New Testament.

Jude, His brother, eventually came to faith in Him and wrote a letter in the New Testament, right before the book of Revelation. So, these guys eventually came to faith, and I have no doubt about the fact that they probably took mom back from John and said, this is our responsibility. I have no doubt about that. I don't know that for a fact, but I believe that they did. But this is something that is pleasing in the sight of God.

Paul goes on now to give some further guidelines for the widow's list. Verse nine, ⁹*"Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having (and then he lists these various things. You know, having been a faithful wife. And That's what it means, by the way, when it says) having been the wife of one husband,"* (it's saying, having been a faithful wife known for her acts of service, you know, faithful and good mother known for showing hospitality, devoting to good works, dah, dah, dah, etc. etc.)

And these were the things that Paul said, these are the guidelines we're going to put into place. And if a woman, frankly, doesn't meet up with these guidelines, then, you know, this is going to be a different sort of a situation. Now let me just pause for a second. I'm going to do something I don't do very often. I'm going to speculate. I honestly don't like speculation a whole lot, but I'm going to speculate that there were some people who didn't like Paul's guidelines.

In other words, I'm assuming Timothy probably, you know, passed these along to the church. I'm assuming there were people in the church who were like, oh, guidelines for taking care of widows. Really? We have to have guidelines? I even know the kind of people who I'll bet opposed these guidelines, I'll tell you, and that doesn't mean they're bad people.

But I can tell you the kind of people they were. They were people with the gift of compassion, and the gift of mercy. Because people who have the gift of compassion and mercy, A, hate guidelines, and 2, can't say no to anybody. Did I go A and 2? Isn't that good? They literally can't say no. So, if I was reading through these guidelines and you were bristling a little bit, just kind of on the inside, you may have just discovered your spiritual gift.

Because that's why we don't put people with the gift of compassion and mercy in administrative positions because they'd sell the farm in a day. It's just because they're just all about just give it away, sort of a thing, but there has to be guidelines because there has to be an organizational structure and there needs to be wisdom and there needs to be equality and fairness and that sort of thing.

And that's why these things are being passed along. So, for those of you that are just uncomfortable with this whole guideline thing, I'm sorry to say your pain isn't quite over. Verse 11. He goes on a little bit here. He says, *¹¹ But refuse to enroll younger widows..*" (This is where people really start kind of getting emotional. Refuse? Refuse a widow? Refuse to enroll, he says, younger widows) *"¹¹ ...for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith."*

Now, stop there. Lest you think Paul is being kind of an ogre here. I need to explain a little something about how they enrolled widows, you know, because you read these words and it makes it sound like if she was receiving support from the church and then decided to get married, she's condemned. Well, that's not really what Paul is saying.

What Paul isn't telling you, because he doesn't really feel like he had to tell you because the person to whom he was writing already knew all this, but what he's

not telling you is that when a widow met those qualifications, when a widow came under the protection and provision of the church, she made a pledge for the rest of her life.

She basically said, my husband is with the Lord, and I am devoting the remainder of my years on this earth to the service of the saints. And she would make this pledge to God, okay? So, she was basically pledging herself with a lifelong commitment to the body of Christ to live this way. And because she made that pledge, the church said, all right we're going to take care of you. We're going to see to your needs and so forth because otherwise, you're free to go remarry or whatever the case might be, you see.

So when a woman made that kind of a pledge and then went back on it, Paul considered that a big deal because she's making a promise to God and then breaking it. And again, to Paul, that's a serious thing. And he had seen some wives or widows, I should say, who had been embraced by the church, and then they began to live lives that were inconsistent with servants who had given or devoted themselves to the Lord. That's what he goes on to say in 13 through 15.

Look there in your Bible. He says, besides that, they learn to be idlers. That means they learn to kind of be idle because they've got time on their hands going about from house to house and not only just idlers, he says, but then they start engaging in gossip. Did you hear about so and so? I can't believe it. Do you know what she told me and on and on and on. And he said, these are things they shouldn't be saying.

So, he says in verse 14, ¹⁴*"I would have younger widows marry, (Nothing wrong with that) bear children manage their households. Give the adversary no occasion for slander"*.

And then he makes a rather serious charge in verse 15 saying that ¹⁵*"That some have already strayed after Satan."* And personally, I don't think Paul's talking about a woman necessarily leaving the faith. I think he's talking about here a woman whose goals and desires have become so directed by the world that they're no longer focused on the concerns and desires of the kingdom of God. In other words, Satan is kind of just captivated their attention. Doesn't mean that they're no longer a believer.

You guys do know that believers can even get captivated by the enemy, right? Yeah, we're not immune to those sorts of things. So anyway, he gives them a final word on widows in verse 16, saying 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 in need, truly” (Truly have nobody else to take care of them).

So there's a real responsibility of family here that we see in these passages. Family, family, family. Families take care of families. It's sad in our culture that we live in a culture where families are often estranged. We've had many calls come into the church office, people seeking help. And one of the things we try to ask is, do you have any family in the area? Often they do, but they've burned so many bridges and they're so estranged from their family that there's no one they can count on. There's no one that they can turn to in their family. Well, yeah, my mom lives over in Nampa. I got a brother in Emmett. I got a sister over in Boise. Well, can they help you? They don't even talk to me. That's what sin does to families.

Now, we turn to elders in verse 17, and as we talk about elders here. Can I remind you that elder and pastor and overseer are synonymous terms, okay? Elder, pastor, we've talked about this a lot in the past, and overseer are used synonymously in the Bible.

So, we're talking about a pastor, elder, overseer. Here we go. ¹⁷*“Let the elders, who rule (or lead well), be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”* (And then Paul explains what he means by double honor). ¹⁸*“For the Scripture says, “you shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,”* (quote from Deuteronomy there, and) *“the laborer deserves his wages.”*

All right. What's Paul talking about here? It's an honor for a man to rise up into a position of leadership within the church. It is a double honor when he then receives support from the church, and he says that this double honor ought to go for those whose primary focus is preaching and teaching. And then he gives the Scripture from the Old Testament saying, for the Scripture even tells us, don't muzzle the ox while it's treading out the grain. They used to hook oxen up to these two arms of this grind mill and they would have them literally just go around in a circle and they would grind the grain into a powder like flour.

And he says in the Old Testament, God said don't put a muzzle on the ox. He's working for you, so let him eat. He needs to have his strength sufficient to be able to do the work that you're asking him to do, right? That makes sense. Well, Paul says this applies to church leaders. Where does he say that? Well, he actually talks about the same thing in 1 Corinthians. Let me show you on the screen. 1 Corinthians chapter 9. He says, first he starts off by asking rhetorical questions.

1 Corinthians 9:7-11 (ESV)

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

⁷ *Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? (Right? Wouldn't that be weird? You need to come fight for your country? Oh, bring your gun.) Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?* ⁸ *Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same?* ⁹ *For it is written in the Law of Moses, (Here's that quote again) "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned?* ¹⁰ *Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. (He says)* ¹¹ *If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?*

By the way, Paul wrote this to the Corinthians, but he didn't accept a dime from them. He said, I won't take any of your money, but I have a right to, I have a right to, but I'm not going to do it because I really like bragging on the Lord. Well, so we're talking about support here. We've been talking about supporting widows. Now we're talking about supporting those in the ministry. And this is a little awkward. I'm standing up here teaching this passage, and yet I'm the recipient of support from the local church.

May I say one thing about supporting a pastor? And I think this is an important distinction. Churches don't pay, well I'll bring it down to our church, okay? Our church does not pay me to do what I do, okay? I receive support from the church so that I am free to do what I do. And that is a distinction.

Because you see, before I was in the ministry, I worked in radio. Most of you know that. And I did it for a number of years. And I came for my board shift. I was a radio announcer on air personality and I did my radio shift usually about four hours long. And then I would be done and then after two weeks, I'd get a paycheck.

And they'd say, you worked, here's your pay for working on the radio. Thank you very much. That's not the way it works in the ministry. I was an employee

of the radio station. I am not an employee of the church. I am a servant of God. And as such, I receive support from the church to free me up to not have to work outside the church so I can devote my time to doing what I'm doing.

Do you understand? Do you understand the difference that makes as it relates to understanding how we see pastors? Because do you remember what Jesus said about employees? He called them hirelings. And even talked about shepherds who were hired. And he said, the hireling cares nothing for the sheep.

Something comes along to threaten the flock. He's like, I'm out of here. I'm not going to risk my life. These aren't my sheep. I'm here just to make some money. He's gone, right? The good shepherd, he said, lays down his life for the sheep. Now I understand that's talking about Jesus, ultimately, but that's the example that he gives to every pastor, slash shepherd.

You are not an employee. You're not a hireling and if necessary lay down your life. So there's a different relationship that's going on here as it relates to support. All right? Now, as we look at verses 19 and 20, Paul, once again, revisits kind of the idea of the example of the pastor/overseer/elder, he starts by saying, ¹⁹*“Don't admit a charge (I think the N I V says, don't entertain a charge against or) an accusation against an elder, except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.*

It's just too easy for someone to make a false accusation against, and the enemy is good at that. So he says, hey, just be careful that it comes from more than one source. But there are times when those accusations are true. How are you going to deal with that? Verse 20. ²⁰*“And for those who persist in sin ”* (Now those, you guys, is not talking about the general body of Christ. It's talking about pastors, elders, overseers).

²⁰*“As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, (so that they) so that the rest may stand in fear.”*

This is the interesting thing about a pastor, elder, overseer. He's an example to the body of Christ in righteousness and unrighteousness. He is, his life is an example in righteousness. The rebuke on his life if he persists in sin is an example to the body of Christ if he persists in sin. So he, I don't know how many of you want to sign up to be a pastor now, but he's basically saying if you're going to mess up, if you're going to be an example to the body of Christ, then your failures will be an example to them as well.

This is not saying that every time somebody persists in sin, we shout it from the rooftops in the church or we tell the body of Christ. This is talking about leaders here. That's the context. How we treat leaders. And so, a leader needs to understand, I am an example to the flock and if I begin to give way to sin, I will still be an example to the flock. An example of what not to do. An example of, yeah, there you go.

Yeah, those are hard things to hear, aren't they? Can you imagine Timothy? He's receiving this from Paul and it's very hard to hear. But that's why he says in verse 21, ²¹“*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules (First of all) without prejudging....*”

Don't prejudge a man, don't prejudge a man. And also, don't respond out of partiality to that man just because you like him. Don't prejudge him because you don't like him. And don't operate out of partiality because you do like him. Don't let your personal views come into play when it comes to sin. It has to be dealt with. The standard must be the same. And then Paul goes on to give what I believe is one of the wisest things to do to avoid the possibility of problems with pastors and leaders falling into sin. Look at verse 22. He says, ²²“*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.*”

This is a great verse. You want to avoid the pain and drama that comes with a church leader falling into sin? He says, wait, and don't be too quick to lay hands. When I'm talking to a young man who are just starting a church, I know what they're going through. When you're in those early days of a church and you have about 10 to 12 people coming on a Sunday, and you're doing everything. I mean, when you're starting a church, you are chief cook and bottle washer. You do everything.

And you really long for people to come alongside and help. And there's a great temptation when someone walks through the door and they look reasonably healthy, and you have every reason to believe they're a genuine Christian to say, why don't you come alongside me without giving time to that process. And I believe personally one of the reasons you see churches get into turmoil and that even result in church splits is because leaders were not vetted properly.

And they just didn't give enough time to see what a guy's life is like. So, he says, don't lay hands too quickly. Take your time. That's what I tell young pastors. Go slow. I tell them, listen. If you have to wait 10 years before you raise up an elder, big deal. Better that than raising up someone who is just a thorn under your saddle. Anyway, verse 23, Paul stops, kind of makes a

parenthetical statement, just personally to Timothy. He says, ²³“*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.*”

We've heard this verse lots of times. You've heard me say that back during biblical times, good drinking water was tough to come by. And it was full of bacteria, although they didn't know that. Do you guys know that we didn't discover bacteria until the 1600s? And it was sometime late in the 1600s, somebody kind of got the idea, I think we ought to boil this, and we can kill this bacteria here, and it worked. People weren't getting, having all those nasty intestinal issues that went along with drinking bacteria laden water.

Well, sometimes bacteria gets into water and it can cause all those problems. And Timothy was a man who drank only water, and it was kind of playing havoc with his digestive tract. And so Paul says, take a little wine. Some people think that he was prescribing a medicinal sort of a thing. It wasn't medicine. He was simply, people drank wine because there wasn't good water. And the fermentation process did kill bacteria. And so, he's telling him, we've kind of noticed over the years that people who drink some wine don't have as many intestinal issues.

Again, they didn't know it was about bacteria at that point, but so he's simply telling him, today we'd say if there was a problem with the water, we'd say boil the water or get a really good filtration system. They didn't have those things, so take a little wine.

And then we come to these interesting final two verses of the chapter where Paul is now thinking back on this whole idea of raising up someone too quickly, laying hands too quickly. He says, ²⁴“*The sins of some people are conspicuous, (You can see it in the way they walk, or you can smell it on their breath. I threw that in there) going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later.*” ²⁵ *So also good works (by the same token here can be) conspicuous, and even those (he says) that are not cannot remain hidden.*”

So, the bottom line of what Paul is saying here, is that before you raise up somebody into a position of church leadership, get to know them. I mean, it sounds like a really smart thing to do, but you'd be shocked how many times we don't just get to know them. Get to know the kind of people they are. Get to know how they respond in different circumstances and situations. There's a lot of ways that people can look very righteous until somebody gets in their face and calls them all kinds of names, spits at them or smacks them or something like that. And all of a sudden, boy, I tell you, the flesh rises up. Well, you don't

know those things sometimes at the beginning, and that's what he's saying here. Some people's personal weaknesses might not be revealed for quite some time after you get to know them, but know this, wait long enough and eventually all of our weaknesses come out.

So he's basically just kind of talking about that and making the point that even when it comes to good works, some people's good works are kind of just out there for everybody to see and others are doing things in a hidden sort of a way for others not to see, even though God does and they will not remain hidden forever. We'll stop there. Pick it up in chapter six next time.

I did it. We did it. We got through one whole chapter. Praise the Lord. Oh, let's stand together if we could please. We're going to have some people down front here to pray with you. If you have some prayer needs that you want to lift before the Lord. I'm just really glad everybody's here today. It's good seeing you guys. It's good seeing smiling faces.

Father, thank you so much for Your Word. Thank you for the instruction, for the insight, for the understanding that Your Word gives us. Lord, we see that the early church was a church that was devoted to compassion and kindness. And I pray Father, that we would carry that on, that we would be people of compassion, people filled with loving kindness toward others, a desire to help and be a blessing.

And, Lord, I thank You for the insights that you've given us here today on church leadership, pastors, elders, overseers so that the whole body of Christ can be in a place of understanding. I thank you, my Father, and I pray for your Holy Spirit to continue to teach us even as we go from this place. For we ask it in Jesus' name, amen.