

**WITNESS – Reaching out to others**  
***(Aim for 20 – 30 minutes)***

Christmas presents a unique moment in our culture where there is an openness to Christian events and ideas. Small group members can work in effective missional partnership with Big Church activities during the festive season through:

A Christmas Carol Service  
Carol Singing in local pubs  
Children’s nativity plays and musicals  
Practical support for vulnerable and needy people in the locality  
Participating in local events that town or parish councils might be putting on

1. Draw up a list of what your church is doing over the Christmas period.
2. Decide which of these activities your small group could get involved in.
3. Let your church leaders know what commitments your small group is making. They will feel encouraged.
4. Pray for God’s blessing over the Christmas period.

# 1 TIMOTHY

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## How Grace Confronts Conflict

### *1 Timothy 5:1–6:2*

*Purpose:*

To see the principles which guide decisions on people at both ends of the leadership spectrum at Ephesus: widows and leaders.

**WELCOME – Breaking the ice**  
***(Aim for 10 minutes)***

What groups of people in your church or fellowship have special needs (physical, emotional, spiritual, social, financial and so forth)?

**WORSHIP – Meeting the Lord**  
***(Aim for 10 – 15 minutes)***

“Do not forget to do good and to share with others for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Hebrews 13.16

Think of people who are known to the group who are in need of friendship at this point in their lives—and offer this as your worship. Don’t only invite those who are easy company, but choose some for whom this will be a significant blessing. Invite them to a “meal” you will eat together. This could be on a group night or at any other time in the week.

Remember that Jesus is among you and your offer of hospitality, generosity, acceptance and kindness to others is a picture of him.

Arrange the venue, time and date of the meal. Delegate tasks so that everyone makes a contribution and shares what they have with others.

**WORD – Applying the truth**  
***(Aim for 40 – 45 minutes)***

At one time or another all of us have probably been in a situation in which we felt that someone in our church or fellowship was sinning. Whether or not we act on the situation and how we communicate to that person has a big effect on the outcome.

Often when we rebuke others about their lifestyles, we come off as being judgmental and self-righteous. When Paul tells Timothy about specific persons and groups he needed to confront about certain issues, he is careful to show how to do so in love. Paul's teaching here gives us valuable guidance on being both direct and loving with other Christians.

1. Read 1 Timothy 5:1–6:2. Paul touches on the different age and gender groups Timothy must lead. How is Timothy to regard the people he ministers to?

② How can you rebuke someone in ways that are clear but also affirm the other person as a member of God's family?

3. How is a godly widow to be distinguished from an ungodly one (vv. 3–8)?

④ In affluent Ephesus, like the UK today, many elderly people were evidently abandoned. What obligations do you have to your own parents?

5. What criteria did a widow need to meet to receive a place on the list of those who received financial aid from the church (vv. 9–10)?

6. The “first pledge” in verse 12 refers to the pledge of service made to the church, described in verse 10, not their first wedding vow. What happened when these younger widows were put on welfare?

7. How does Paul's counsel contrast with the advice of the false teachers (see, for example, 4:3)?

8. Why do you think Paul gives these specific instructions about rebuking an elder in verses 19–20?

9. How have you found verses 24–25 to be true?

10. From 6:1–2 what do you think has been happening when slaves become believers?

How is this situation to be corrected?