

Pray

Today we are continuing our look at *1 Timothy*
By looking at chapter 5 and the first two verses of chapter 6

Now very often in the bible we read about principles
And then try to work out what they mean for us in our context
On this occasion
Paul is making specific suggestions to Timothy
about how he leads the churches under his care

and so for a moment I want to step back from the text
and suggest that the underlying principle behind all of these applications is
RESPECT

The bible teaches that we are all made in the image of God
Young and old, male and female, black and white
There is something in all of us which reflects the image of God

And because of that image of God in each of us
We are all called to **RESPECT** people who are not like us
So if we are old we are called to respect those who are younger
And if we are young we are called to respect those who are older
If we are male we are called to respect women
And if we are female we are called to respect men
And if we are white then we are called to respect those who are black
And if we are black then we are called to respect those who are white

This whole passage is about RESPECT

So let's now look at *1 Tim 5* which you will find on *page 1193*
And see what Paul says about respecting widows, clergy and masters

And Paul's first point is
RESPECT the widows who really are in need

A little bit of background
At the time of Jesus there was not old age pension or unemployment benefit
AND when people became Christians
they were very often disowned by their families
and as a result the church had a duty of care to the widows among them
but they did not have the financial resources to support all of them

And Paul seems to be making two points
The first of which is **Prioritise the widows in greatest need**

So Paul says
Some widows should be looked after by their families
(1 Timothy 5:4) But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.
(1 Timothy 5:8) If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
(1 Timothy 5:16) If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

Some widows are too young to be included
(1 Timothy 5:11) As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry.

AND some widows should be cared for by the church
(1 Timothy 5:5) The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.

And we too should care for those in greatest need in society
Which is what we are trying to do through the foodbank

And the second point Paul is making about widows seems to be

Those who are supported should also serve

1 Timothy 5:9-10

(9) No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband,

(10) and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

And interestingly a little later an order of widows evolved

QUOTE - BST page 132

So what happened is something like this

The widows received support from the church

And in return they helped with the work of the church

And I think that is a lovely touch

Because it is a very simple way of giving someone SELF RESPECT

It is a little bit like

When we were in Eccles we ran a café in the church on Fridays

And once a month on a Friday afternoon the people who came to the café

Assembled the parish magazine – and they loved it

It was a simple sitting down job that they could do

And they knew they really were needed

So the church

RESPECTED the widows who really were in need

Both by giving them food and shelter

And by encouraging them to serve – which gave them SELF-RESPECT

Paul's second point is

RESPECT the people you employ AND - RESPECT your team members

again a bit of background - Paul was a church planter

And Timothy and Titus were members of his church planting team

And Timothy had several churches under his care

And had been asked to appoint clergy to help look after these churches

So in effect - Paul was like an archbishop

And Timothy was like a bishop

And the clergy were Bishop Timothy's team

So Paul made four points to Timothy

1 Clergy should be paid

1 Timothy 5:17-18- (17) The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

(18) For the Scripture says, Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain, and The worker deserves his wages.

2 There is a Grievance procedure

1 Timothy 5:19-20- (19) Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.

(20) Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

3 Be Impartial and Avoid Favouritism

1 Timothy 5:21 I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favouritism.

4 Be very careful about the selection of leaders

1 Timothy 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

(24) The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.

(25) In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden

Now I am aware that none of us is a bishop employing a clergy team

So how does this apply to us

I am suggesting

RESPECT the people you employ AND RESPECT your team members

So on occasions we do employ people

It might be a builder – or a painter and decorator

It might be a gardener – or a cleaner

Lets respect the people we employ

Once when I was in Manchester I took a funeral

for someone who had been a groundsman at Manchester United

and I was very impressed when Sir Alec Ferguson came along

or here in Eversley

I was very impressed when a family invited their cleaner to a family funeral

That is respect

And the same applies in the teams around the church

Lets respect our team members

Jane leads the Sunday rota

Jeff leads the music

I lead a team of home group leaders

Camilla leads a team of children's and youth work leaders

Lets each of us respect our team members

And listen to them and support them

So that we can all reach our full potential

and Paul's final point is

RESPECT the people you work for

and RESPECT your team leader

and again some background

Christianity is and always has been against slavery

Slaves have no freedom of choice

and freedom of choice is a core value in Christianity

so why didn't Jesus and the apostles simply abolish slavery then and there

well slavery was woven into the whole fabric of society

and slave rebellions were put down in the roman empire

so the church played a long game

and taught the principles which did eventually lead to abolition

but that meant that Christian slaves had a new self confidence

and Christian slaves working for Christian masters

were treating their masters as equals and that was creating difficulties

so Paul says *1 Timothy 6:1-2*

(1) All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered.

(2) Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.

So what Paul is saying is **RESPECT the people you work for**

If they are not Christians you might win them for Christ

And if they are Christians even more important to help them succeed

And the same applies in our teams in the church

RESPECT your team leader

We are doing our best

By all means make a suggestion and By all means offer to help

But don't tear other people down – that is not Christian

And this applies to me too

Bishop David, Bishop of Basingstoke was my mate at college

But now he is my team leader

And I need to RESPECT him as my bishop as well as my friend

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So despite this portion of the bible being written 2000 years ago

In the specific circumstances of slavery and no welfare state

I hope that you can see that it very much applies to us today

And that by **living lives that RESPECT others**

Is living out the gospel

Let's pray