

Dear friends and family,

Family. What does a healthy, functioning family provide? Why is family important?

Do people even value the role of the family?

Yes. Actually, they do.

According to research\*, family is the number one source of importance and meaning to people who were polled.

Moving through 1 Timothy, we find that in chapter 5, there seems to be a large emphasis regarding widows. However, upon further study, we see that Paul is offering instruction across several dynamics, covering the role of a family, the treatment of elders, and teachings for young and old.

All too often, when the Bible addresses topics of this nature, we have a natural instinct to point out what *someone else* should be doing.

Often, we hear this phrase: “*See, the Bible says you ought to do...*”

These statements typically act as self-serving entities.

Roughly translated, statements like this actually mean something like this:

“*I want this, therefore, I will point out how you owe it to me.*”

In this passage, Paul outlines what is expected in a Christian dynamic, how to encourage others in their life with Christ, and how to treat all people. No one is “owed” anything, but instead, Paul offers instruction and guidelines for a healthy functioning body of Christ.

As you study these passages this week, it may be easy to brush past a category thinking it does not apply to you. While I encourage you to read with an eye for what category may relate to you, I also challenge you to seek to understand what the Bible is personally instructing you to do. Although tempting, don’t read this passage with an outward perspective thinking of only how others should treat you. Instead, apply it inwardly and ask yourself, “What can I do to further the kingdom of Christ?”

### **Pastor’s Point of View**

The big question:

**What is the importance of family and how is the church an extension of the family?**

In a 2003 Gallup Poll, 93% of the respondents communicated that family is an extremely or very important aspect of life. However, when the topic changed to religion, there was a distinct difference in level of importance as attributed by men and women, and those older and

younger. Men under 50 years old found religion to be significant at the rate of 56% . Of men over 50 years, 59% found religion important. Women under 50 years old responded that religion was important, at a rate of 65%, slightly higher than the men. However, women polled who were over 50 years old found religion to be important at the rate of 83%. Why the dramatic jump?

Perhaps it is because those older women are from a generation that gave higher importance to religion in general. But that would mean that the men should have found it more important as well, which didn't appear to be the case.

Interestingly, in relation to this chapter, it may mean that for older women, the church becomes their surrogate family. This data shows a strong correlation between the importance we all place on family and how the church should act as an extension of the family, especially in regard to widows.

### **Day 1** - READ 1 Timothy 5:1-2

1. These verses establish important context for this portion of Paul's letter to Timothy. Paul makes a transition from chapters 3 and 4, which address the offices of the church and how to protect the church from apostasy, to the broader role of the church as a family. How are we directed to treat one another in these two verses?
2. Into which group that Paul refers to do you personally belong?
3. What commands may personally relate to you and how should you be treating others in the church?
4. "In all purity." There is much in the news today about the mistreatment of women and inappropriate relations, even within the church. Scripture makes it abundantly clear how we are called to treat women. We should seek to honor older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, and above all, honor all women with an absolute eye toward purity!

### **Day 2** - READ 1 Timothy 5:3-8

1. What is the categorical definition of a "widow indeed"?
2. What role should the family play in caring for their own elderly women?
3. What role should the church play AND when, in caring for elderly women?
4. How does Paul describe the one, (and contextually he is speaking to men here as those commanded to provide for the family; Eph. 5:23, 25, 31, & 6:4) that does not provide for his own house?

### **Day 3** - READ 1 Timothy 5:9-10

1. What are the qualifications Paul outlines for a widow to be “put on the list”?
2. The wife of one man, mirrors the qualification of men who serve as leaders in the church (3:2). It’s important to note here that Paul is not disparaging being married more than once. (5:14) He is however, instructing that the church's resources be devoted to those widows who have the fewest relatives to help. What would this look like in our context today?
3. “The list”, or some translations say *enrolled*, simply means that the church acts as a surrogate family for that widow. The church agrees to provide the necessary support and oversight that a widow would receive if she had children to watch over her.

**Day 4** - READ 1 Timothy 5:11-16

1. Who should not be on the church’s list?
2. Why is it important that these young widows not be on the list?
3. What correlation is there between the service outlined in verses 9-10 and the lack of service mentioned here?
4. Widows who are placed on the church’s list of support make a pledge to serve the church as they are able, the same way they would serve their family. In return, the church will act as their family in support of their physical and financial needs. What is Paul concerned will happen if younger widows are placed on the list?

Paul closes this section by also including that female children have the same responsibility to care for their elder widows as male children. This was a somewhat significant departure from the cultural norm of the time. Men and sons were seen as the providers but daughters would not normally be expected to serve in the same role as men.. Paul states that women too should take on the role of care and support for the widows. This section of scripture is a beautiful representation of how the family should operate in love and support, especially in the care of the elderly. It also provides some strict guidelines for how and when the church should step in to fill that need.

Paul highlights that a believer should have a mindset that is focused on serving others. Instead of assuming the worldly perspective which asks, *What’s in it for me?* , we should instead ask, *How can I serve?* God designed the church body in a manner which establishes that each member of the body of Christ is part of the kingdom family. When we begin to view one another as father, mother, brother, and sister, it becomes easier to serve. May it be our goal to support and care for the widows, to treat all women with the utmost purity, to respect our elder men, and to grow in sibling love alongside our young men and women. May you see the important role you have in the body of Christ!

*“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:12*

In faith and sound doctrine,  
Pastor Matt

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*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **RUN** with endurance the race that is set before us -- Hebrews 12:1*

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*\*[2003 Gallup Poll](#) and a [2018 Pew Research survey](#)*