

## **We are family**

1 Timothy 5:1-16

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### **Introduction**

*An atheist was taking a walk through the woods.*

*"What majestic trees! What powerful rivers! What beautiful animals!" he said to himself.*

*As he continued walking alongside the river he heard a rustling in the bushes. Turning to look, he saw a 7 foot grizzly charging towards him. He ran as fast as he could up the path.*

*Looking over his shoulder he saw that the bear was closing in on him. His heart was pumping frantically and he tried to run even faster. He tripped and fell on the ground.*

*He rolled over to pick himself up but saw the bear raising his paw to take a swipe at him.*

*At that instant the atheist cried out: "Oh my God!..."*

*Time stopped.*

*The bear froze.*

*The forest was silent.*

*It was then that bright light shone upon the man and a voice came out of the sky saying,*

*"You deny my existence for all of these years, teach others I don't exist and even credit creation to a cosmic accident. Do you expect me to help you out of this predicament?*

*Am I to count you as a believer?"*

*The atheist looked directly into the light, "It would be hypocritical of me to suddenly ask you to treat me as a Christian now, but perhaps, could you make the BEAR a Christian?"*

*"Very well," said the voice.*

*The light went out.*

*And the sounds of the forest resumed.*

*And then the bear lowered his paw, bowed his head and spoke,*

*"Lord, bless this food which I am about to receive and for which I am truly thankful."*

The church should function as a family! We are set apart to be a loving, nurturing, close knit family, taking special care of the vulnerable members within it. We are family!

God is calling us to be an example to the world.

**Reading: 1 Timothy 5:1-16**

## **1. Honour and support the vulnerable members in our church family.**

*vs3...Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.*

A widow is a woman whose husband has died.

1<sup>st</sup> century widows in an unfortunate position:

- Struggle economically – her age and the culture
- Struggle socially – unable to relate.

Who are the vulnerable in our context?

The single mom or dad, the person made redundant, physical accident, refugee, crisis, calamity.

Conventional wisdom “God helps those who help themselves”

God’s Word “God is committed to helping those who cannot help themselves”

## Throughout the Bible...

*God is described as a 'father to the fatherless' and a 'defender of widows' (Ps 68:5); and it is written of him that 'he defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow' (Dt 10:18). Because this is the kind of God he is, his people are to be the same. 'Do not take advantage of the widow or an orphan,' he says. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused...' (Ex 22:22).*

In God's kingdom there is a great reversal.

- Weak are Strong
- Poor are Rich
- Sick are Made well
- Sinful are Sinless/ Restored

## **2. How do we honour and support the vulnerable in our church family?**

1. Respect and care for them...vs2 "Treat older woman as mothers"
2. Affirm their valuable role in our community...vs3 "Give proper recognition...."
3. By providing financially for them...vs4, 8, 16. (Wording implies financial help)
  - Repaying vs4
  - Provide vs8

- Meeting the widows need's vs16
  - PAF – Pastoral Assistant Fund
  - Feeding the hungry - Christmas food packs
  - Care for kids
  - You could invite someone over for lunch
  - Ask God and listen!

4. Honour and support by holding our church family accountable.

*vs1...Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older woman as mothers, and younger woman as sisters, with absolute purity.*

In 1:18-19 Paul warns Timothy to heed his instruction so that Timothy would not shipwreck his faith & 3:15 Paul charges Timothy to instruct the household/family of God. Remember Timid Timothy (2Tim1:7).

So Timothy was to instruct and challenge his Christian family. If he recognised destructive patterns of sin in the lives of those he loved he:

- Should not keep quiet about it – Passivity.
- Rebuke in anger and bitterness.
- In Love with great Discretion.

## Flight to Egypt

*A Sunday school class was learning all about the birth of baby Jesus. They read the exciting tale of the Flight to Egypt where Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus had to flee to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod, who was trying to kill Jesus. After they finished the story, the teacher asked them all to draw what they thought the flight to Egypt looked like.*

*The first little girl got up and showed her picture. It had Mary and Jesus riding on a big gray donkey with Joseph walking alongside.*

*The next little boy had a fantastic picture of the family riding a camel through the desert, complete with pyramids in the background and even a couple of mummies lying around!*

*The next little boy got up, and there was a picture of a big old jet airliner streaking through the sky with 4 people in it.*

*The teacher tried not to laugh, and said. "Well, Johnny. I can kind of see where you would have come up with an airplane.....the story is called the Flight to Egypt, but who are these people in the plane?"*

*Little Johnny pointed to the first and said "That's Joseph." The teacher nodded. "This is mother Mary" He pointed to the next person "This is the baby Jesus." The teacher said, "Yes, but who is this fourth person?"*

*"Well, that's Pontius – the Pilot of course!"*

### Two Challenges for us.

1. Young folks-do not let fear, passivity, timidity or laziness stop you from fulfilling your calling.
2. Older folks-do not let insecurity, pride, or comfort stop you from being challenged by someone who is younger than you.

God might want to unlock something in you that requires you to speak or listen to someone else.

### **3. Give the enemy no opportunity.**

*vs14...So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes, and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. <sup>15</sup>Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.*

Now certain widows had not withstood the cunning plans of Satan. They were vulnerable and Satan had drawn them away from the dependence on God. The church was also seen as financing such woman and this brought the church into disrepute.

Paul therefore encourages the younger widows to not place themselves in a compromising position, in so doing saving themselves and the reputation of the church.

He also uses the same strong language when speaking about Christians that don't look after their families.

*vs8...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.*

Paul's heart is to protect his family from the grievous schemes of the devil and from the damaging accusations of critics.

*Vs7...Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame.*

Mail& Guardian – 7 killed/day & 1rape/10min

If you have been at the butt end of gossip or if you have been left alone, vulnerable and not cared for, then you will know that this is the scheme of the devil to destroy the church family and bring us into disrepute.

## **Conclusion**

This is Paul's challenge to us! To be people that always protect each other, who always seeks to honour and support, to lovingly correct, so that we give the enemy no foothold in our family.

This is Paul's bold challenge to us!

## A Response

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made – I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colourless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotion, plaudits or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognised, praised, regarded or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean in His presence, walk by patience, am uplifted by prayer and labour with power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions are few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, pander at the pool of popularity or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And, when He comes for His own, He will have no problem recognising me...my banner will be clear!

-Excerpt from The Signature of Jesus