

Church: Living in the Household of God (1 Timothy 5:1-16)
For the week of November 20, 2016

Spiritual Disciplines = Spiritual Maturity

Spiritual disciplines are those personal and interpersonal activities given by God in the Bible as the sufficient means believers in Jesus Christ are to use in the pursuit of godliness. They are the habits of devotion that have been practiced by God's people since biblical times.

- Describe a godly person you know who has reached spiritual maturity through discipline. Which spiritual disciplines has he/she practiced regularly?
- When we practice the spiritual disciplines with the goal of godliness in mind, our discipline has direction. Jesus is our example of discipline. Look up these verses: Matthew 4:12; Luke 2:46-47; John 13:2-6; 17:4. What does each say about Jesus and His pursuit of the spiritual disciplines?

-
1. Read 1 Timothy 5:1-16 as a group. What are the key themes in this passage?

5:1-2

2. How should believers treat older men, younger men, older women and younger women?

3. How can you offer correction to someone in ways that are clear but also affirm the other person as a member of God's family?

5:3-16

Paul speaks about the care of widows. In a world without any form of state-led welfare, the church from the very beginning took upon itself the task of caring for those with nobody to look after them and no means of supporting themselves. This meant, in particular, widows. In the ancient world, women whose husbands had died often faced total destitution. Often, when a person became a Christian, their own family would disown them. The church faced the task of living as an alternative family.

4. What problems is Paul trying to avoid by going into such detail on how to care for widows?

5. Whose responsibility is it to care for the needy (this includes those within the church and outside the church)?

6. How do these instructions relate to situations we face in our own day?

7. How is a godly widow to be distinguished from an ungodly widow?

8. In affluent Ephesus, like twenty-first century America, many elderly people were evidently abandoned. What obligations do you have to your own parents (if living)?

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

10. Why shouldn't younger widows be put on the "list of widows" (5:11)?

11. How do younger widows bring judgment upon themselves (5:12)?

12. Was Paul's description in 5:13 of the bad habits of younger widows too harsh? Why or why not?

13. Why did Paul encourage Christian women to care for the widows in their families (5:16)?

NOTE: RiverLakes offers the Cheerleaders ministry for widows. This group meets monthly on the third Saturday of the month from September through May. Their desire is to encourage and inspire old and new friendships for widows and mature single women. If interested, contact Christine Stephens at 661.589.9733 ext. 231.

Pray

- Pray for our widows and God's protection. May they feel loved; may they feel connected with others; and may they feel appreciated.

- May we all pray to God and offer thanks for his many blessings as we celebrate Thanksgiving with family and/or friends.