

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: June 30, 2019

Lesson Title: "Being Responsible"

Lesson Passage: 1 Timothy 5:1-8,17-21

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Today's seminary education for prospective pastors includes more than studies in Bible and theology. Courses in pastoral ministry include practical advice for ministers. For example, they are schooled in family relationships and are taught how to relate to family members of all ages. In Paul's correspondence with Timothy, as he schooled his young disciple in the art of pastoral ministry, he dealt with such practical aspects of congregational life. In this week's lesson passage, he tells him how to relate to various people within the church, especially elderly members.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Describe the "widows" and "elders" mentioned in the lesson passage. (2) Identify basic principles in Paul's advice to Timothy concerning his treatment of older members of the congregation.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Start with this: In 1900, average life expectancy in our country was less than 50 years; but, today, one of every 15 senior adults is 85 or older. This trend toward greater longevity has dramatically increased the number of older people in church congregations. *Indicate that this lesson deals with Paul's pastoral advice concerning relationships with older persons in the community of Christians.*

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. As you read 1 Tim. 5:1-2, call attention to Paul's family-centered terminology. *Comments:* The young pastor is to treat older men like fathers and younger men like brothers, older women like mothers and younger women like sisters. This offers us insight into Paul's way of looking at relationships within the community of faith in terms of family relationships.

2. Comment on the advice, "Rebuke not...but intreat" (v. 1): The structure of the Greek text suggests that "Do not rebuke" applies to all four groups mentioned in verses 1 and 2. Paul is advising Timothy, the young pastor, to treat members of the congregation with courtesy, exhorting and encouraging them rather than scolding and criticizing them. FOR DISCUSSION: A deacon in a country church complimented a former pastor for being a "hard preacher," meaning

that he typically scolded the congregation in his preaching. Would you agree? Is it a pastor's duty to rebuke members of the congregation, from the pulpit or in private?

3. As class members examine 1 Tim. 5:3-8, ask them to note the instructions concerning the responsibility of Christians for supporting their families and relatives: (1) The basic principle is stated in v. 8: Christians who do not take care of their relatives, and especially the members of their immediate families, have compromised the Christian faith, and are acting worse than non-Christians. (2) Taking care of needy members of the family is more than simply a natural duty; it is a religious obligation. Adult Christian children and grandchildren should feel some obligation for repaying their parents and grandparents for the effort and expense they invested in raising them (v. 4). (NOTE: Verse 4 should read, "If a widow has children or grandchildren," because, in 1611, when the KJV was published, "nephews" meant "grandchildren.") (3) In addition to caring for the elderly in their own families, Christians should honor "real" widows ("widows indeed," vv. 3 & 5) in their fellowship (i.e., widows who have no one to support them), by providing aid for them. (4) However, Paul makes a distinction between deserving widows who are faithful Christians, and self-indulgent widows who are spiritually dead because their only interest is to please themselves (5:6).

4. Focus on the instructions concerning the treatment of elders in the congregation (in 1 Tim. 5:17-18): (1) "Elders" could refer simply to older men in the congregation; but "who rule well" ("who do good work as leaders," v. 17, TEV) suggests that they had some official responsibility in the church. In either case, the point is that if they preached and taught the word, in addition to managing the affairs of the congregation, they carried heavy responsibilities and deserved double pay. (The Greek word translated "honor" in v. 17 often denoted "pay," as does our word "honorarium.") (2) Verse 18 makes it clear that Paul was speaking of remuneration for services. (3) Elders, like all leaders, were particularly vulnerable to criticism; thus, Paul's caution in v. 19. Only accusations verified by two or three witnesses, not cheap gossip, should be taken seriously. (Compare Matt. 18:16.)

CLOSING THE LESSON

To review, ask the class to recall basic principles that seem to be implied in the lesson passage: EXAMPLE: Families have a God-given responsibility to care for their own. Churches should "be family" to those who have no families of their own. Elderly members of a congregation should be treated with respect. Older men and women should have opportunities to engage in meaningful Christian service.

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