

Honouring One Another

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[0 : 00] Well, you could grab a Bible, although the verses will be on the screen as well. And I thought I'd start with a couple of questions this morning. First question is, does it matter how we treat one another?

And the second question is, should we treat one another the same? I wonder what you think. Why don't you take 30 seconds to talk to the person next to you, in front of you, behind you, wherever, and see what you've got with those questions, those answers.

Off you go. 30 seconds. 30 seconds. Okay, that was 27 seconds. We're a bit behind schedule today, so I have to cut it short, three seconds.

But hopefully you said for at least the first question, yes. But I wonder the second question, whether that was a bit trickier, because it's kind of a yes and no, isn't it?

Yes, we ought to love and honour all people, but no, it might be expressed different ways, depending on who they are. And that's what our passage is really all about today.

[0 : 58] The word honour comes up three times, although it's not always translated in our NIV version. But in verse 3, we give proper recognition, literally honour those widows who are in need.

The honour comes up in verse 17. And even in chapter 6, verse 1, where it talks about slaves and masters, full respect is literally the word honour. And so that's the theme that runs throughout the passage.

But again, that honour will be expressed differently depending on who they are. So there's a fair bit to cover. So let's get straight into it. So at point 1 and verse 1, Paul tells Timothy, Paul tells Timothy how to treat one another in the church.

And notice there is a difference depending on age and gender. And so when it comes to older men, even though Timothy is the leader, he's not to rebuke them harshly, but exhort them respectfully as children are to treat fathers.

So also he's to treat old women respectfully as children are to treat their mothers. Because age demands respect. Older people have gone before us, have more life experience than us, even though teenagers think they know everything, right?

[2 : 29] No, they don't. Older people have often paid their dues and paved the way for us. And that's true, not just for Timothy, but for all of us. And I think the Eastern cultures are ahead of us Western cultures here.

In the West, have you noticed how we've dropped Mr. and Mrs. now? We don't tend to use Mr. and Mrs. so-and-so much these days. And I think that was in an effort to try and connect with younger people, you know, kind of drop any kind of barriers.

But as society often does, they throw the baby out with the bathwater, don't they? And so they've lost even more respect for older people. So much so that one of my Bible study groups last week was saying that older people simply seem irrelevant, even by their own households.

But it's not to be in God's household. And so perhaps we could follow the Eastern culture's way of calling older people auntie and uncle, which is what the Eastern cultures do, don't you?

Which is both respectful and reminds us we're family. Either way, we are to respect older people, whether it's by letting them go ahead of us or giving our seat to them or certainly by the way we speak.

[3 : 44] And older people, let the younger people do that. I know some older people don't like younger people doing that because it says to them that they're older. And no one likes being told they're old.

I don't like being told I'm old by my kids. No one likes it, right? But let them show you respect. In fact, you've worked hard all your life. So enjoy it.

Make the most of it. And then when it comes for the younger ones, well, younger men, they're to be treated as brothers and younger women as sisters with absolute purity.

And notice how he adds a bit for the younger women. He adds with absolute purity. Most likely because young girls are often more vulnerable to men's unwanted advances.

And that's still true today. Younger women are more likely to suffer from sexual assault than younger men. I mean, the stats back it up, don't they?

[4 : 45] You see, despite the world trying to destroy the genders, we are different but equal. Equal worth but different genders. And so Paul says to Timothy, as a church, we're to treat them as equal but different.

Younger men as brothers and younger women as sisters with absolute purity. And just like an older brother or father would protect his daughter or sister, you know, protect her purity, well, so too are we for younger women in the church.

The point is we're to honour one another appropriately in God's house. Why? Well, because we're family, aren't we? That's implied by the language Paul uses here.

You know, Jesus died for us not only to forgive us our sins but to unite us together as members of his family. That's why Paul uses father, mother, brother, sister here, doesn't he?

And so as God's household, we're to honour one another accordingly because we are family. And in God's household, we're to honour widows for this pleases God.

[5 : 56] So point two, verse three, next group, give proper recognition to those widows or literally honour those widows who are really in need. And this phrase, widows who are really in need, is actually repeated at the end of this group in verse 16.

You see on the slide there how the words in yellow are exactly the same. They're exactly the same in the original one. So this is what this group, this section is really about, although there's a few other things he'll mention along the way.

And so between verse three and 16, we learn about what it means to be a widow really in need. As opposed to those who have support. Which is why Paul addresses widows and not widowers.

Did you notice that? Because widowed men in those days could still work to support themselves.

While widowed women could not. And there was no superannuation, no centrelink, of course.

And so the church is to help those widows, unless they have support, like in verse four. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, they should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents.

[7 : 15] For this is pleasing to God. 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. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.

And so here you see a widow who is really in need, verse five, only has God to put her hope in.

Whereas a widow who's not really in need has children and grandchildren to help her.

And these kids or grandkids are to honour them by supporting them for, verse four, this is pleasing to God. Indeed, it's part of putting our religion, our faith into practice, which means if we don't do this for perhaps our parents who are widowed, then we're not only opening our faith up to blame, we're actually denying our faith and worse than unbeliever, verse seven.

Give the people these instructions so that no one may be open to blame. Anyone who does not provide for their relatives and especially for their own household has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

I remember when my grandfather passed away, my grandmother was all alone with no job or income. And before aged care places were what they are today, she sold her house and gave the money to her four sons.

[8 : 44] And my dad used his part, his portion of the inheritance to build a literal granny flat, you know, en suite, bedroom, lounge room, that sort of thing.

And she came to live with us for a number of years. You see, they put their religion, their faith into practice. For others I know, some who have a parent in aged care, they do everything they can to care for them and visit them.

That's putting their faith into practice. For others I know, they travel some distance to spend time to care for their parents. That's putting your faith, your religion into practice.

For those who live too far away, since these days we live further afield than many people did in Paul's day, then they do everything they can to make sure their parents or parent who's widowed is

supported.

Perhaps sharing the care with other siblings. That's putting your faith into practice. If we are Christians, we are not to neglect our parents who are in need or expect the church to pick up the tab, but care for them for this is pleasing to God.

[9 : 53] On the other hand, those widows really in need, the church is to care for. Who are these? Well, verse 9 and 10, no widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over 60.

That might seem really young these days. Has been faithful to her husband, is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up her children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord's people, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

Now, in verse 9, the list probably refers to the list of widows the church is to financially support. But notice the two criteria on the list.

It's older age, over 60, which was quite old back then. It doesn't seem old these days because we're all living longer. And full of good deeds, whether that's being faithful to her husband or raising her kids or showing hospitality and so on.

And so those who are younger widows and not full of good deeds, well, they're not to be put on this list so that God's household won't be open to slander.

[11 : 05] Verse 11, he says, As for younger widows, then, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus, they bring judgment on themselves because they have broken their first pledge or literally faith.

Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to.

It seems some younger widows were put on this list to be supported by the church. But because the church provided for their needs and they had all this free time, and because they're younger, they also had energy and still had desires.

And so they were free to kind of indulge in these desires or gossip. Verse 11 and 12, their sensual desires overcame their dedication to Christ. And verse 12, they bring judgment on themselves because they've broken their first faith, literally.

I don't think it's talking so much about someone who's a nun, for example, you know, and decides to dedicate their life to Christ and chooses to remarry. Rather, I think the idea here is those younger ones who give in and have an affair and do and forsake Christ and pursue multiple affairs because they're giving in to their sensual desires.

[12 : 22] Or verse 13, they have time to go around and gossip and cause trouble. They're kind of like you see on those reality TV shows. Have you heard about these ones, the Real Housewives of Beverly Hills?

I've never seen it myself, but apparently they're loaded and they have all this free time because they're supported. And what do they do with their free time? They go and help charities and do good work and things like that.

No, they gossip about each other and have fights with each other. You see, these who are younger and still have great desires and energy are to use them appropriately.

I should say, by the way, that Paul applies the same principle to men. He's not being sexist here. So in 2 Thessalonians, he says those men who are idle and disruptive, and we know it's men because he tells them to settle down and earn the food they eat.

In other words, get a job. And again, in those days, it was the men who worked. And so he applies it evenly. But again, the point is those who are younger, who still have greater desires and energy, are to use them appropriately.

[13 : 23] And so he says in verse 14, I counsel, so I counsel younger widows to marry. That's how you use your desires appropriately. And to have children, to manage their homes.

That's how you use your energy appropriately, doing good deeds. And so to give the enemy no opportunity for slandering Christians. Although sadly, some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.

They've forsaken their first faith and pursued their desires and so forth. But the main point of this group really is to caring for those in need.

And so he says in verse 16, And if any woman who is a believer has widows in her care, in fact, any household, then they should continue to help them and not let the church be burdened with them so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

And so for us, if we have parents who are really in need, you know, they have no support, where to care for them? Where to look after them?

[14:30] Where to watch over them? And for those who have absolutely no one, then we as a church are to care for them and support them. This is how God will answer their prayer back in verse 5, through his church.

That's why we have a benevolent fund here at HTD, so that we can support those who are really in need. And if you are one of those people who are really in need, who have no one else, listen, don't ever think you are a burden to us.

Please come and ask us for help. We want to care for you as God's people, your family. And for the rest of us, we can help doing that as a church by giving to the benevolent fund so that those who are really in need can be cared for, you see.

So this is pleasing to God. Well, we're to honour one another, and then widows, and point three is elders. So verse 17. The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

And as I mentioned a few weeks ago, there's only two recognised groups of leaders in the Bible. There's the overseers and the deacons, and that's the same as elder, pastor, and shepherd. And so it's talking about honouring people like me, which makes this rather awkward for me, actually.

[15:57] Though notice it says in verse 17, it's those who direct the affairs of the church well. Sadly, there have been some who have not done it well, which is why some people today may find it hard to honour church leaders these days.

But what does double honour mean? Well, the next verse gives us a bit of a clue. Verse 18 starts with the word because or for. Because scripture says, do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

In other words, let the ox eat from its work, and the worker deserves their wages. In other words, like the church is to honour widows with financial support, so it is to honour elders with financial support, which makes this even more awkward for me now.

But why are we to do this? Well, because scripture says so. Do you see verse 18? Scripture says. And he quotes Deuteronomy, and then the second verse is from Jesus himself in Luke chapter 10. And so as a church, we're to honour elders by financially supporting them because scripture says so. And can I say I am so encouraged by those who do give faithfully and cheerfully and even sacrificially here.

[17:12] It's not about the amount that matters. For some, you don't have very much at all. But they still give, you know, even if it's \$5, but that's sacrificial for them because they don't have much at all.

It's not about the amount that matters to God. It's about our attitude. And in doing so, you are honouring your pastors because scripture says so. Now, Paul will have more to say about money next week.

But does this mean this week that double honour means double pay? Because someone in one of my Bible study groups last week thought that. They said, oh, double honour, that means we should pay you double.

And I went, you can come again. No, I don't think it means that. Some commentators say that, but I don't think it means that. I think the second way we're to honour is to trust them because that's what seems behind their very next verse, verse 19.

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Here he's saying that you are to basically trust them unless there's evidence, you see.

[18:19] That is, you don't entertain or don't easily believe an accusation and spread the rumour, but you trust them and give them the benefit of the doubt. And so I think the double honour refers to support and trust here.

But on the flip side, if there is evidence, then we're not to keep silent either, verse 20. For those elders who are sinning, you are to reprove before everyone so that the others, the other elders, may take the warning.

Notice in verse 20, Paul says, those elders who are sinning. The idea here is they are continuing in a sin in an unrepentant way. I remember a former pastor of my parents' church who had anger issues and often lost his temper with his parishioners and was quite verbally aggressive and sometimes swore at them.

And the deacons of the church spoke to him, but he refused to acknowledge he had any problem. And so they got up in church one day. I was quite little. I think I was 12 at the time. So this is some time ago. And they rebuked him publicly. But sadly, he did not repent. And so they ended up asking him to leave. But what was even sadder was a couple of the deacons were his friends.

[19 : 41] And so they supported him even though they knew what he was doing was wrong. And so you know what ended up happening? It split the church. Some of those elders who supported him went with some of the other supporters and the church was almost split 50-50.

Which is why Paul goes on to say in verse 21, I charge you, Timothy, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels to keep these instructions without partiality and do nothing out of favoritism.

Notice how Paul brings out the big guns here. You know, God, Jesus and the angels. It's like here is his two or three witnesses. And he says do nothing out of favoritism.

Don't let your friendship for an elder or even your fear of an elder because they're older than you stop you from rebuking them if there is evidence.

Or ignore those pastors who abuse kids as some did in the Catholic Church and even the Anglican Church. It's why the Archbishop of Canterbury had to resign.

[20 : 49] I think it was end of last year, was it? I can't remember now. Because he didn't rebuke a minister who was administering corporal punishment to some boys, which was tantamount to physical abuse.

But showing favoritism and covering it up won't be good for the church. It's split my parents' church and it's given today's church a bad name, hasn't it? And it's why Timothy is to be careful when appointing elders and to watch himself too.

Verse 22. So he says, Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands. That's how they appointed an elder. And do not share in the sins of others.

Keep yourself pure. Stop drinking only water and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses. The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them. The sins of others trail behind them.

In the same way, good deeds are obvious. And even those that are not obvious at the moment cannot remain hidden forever. You see, the sins of some are not always obvious, but like good works, they will not remain hidden forever.

[21 : 56] And so Timothy is to take time, not be hasty in appointing elders. He's to make sure they have a godly character as we saw in the third chapter, which is what we do here at HTD.

We take time to watch and observe people's character. Even when it comes to serving on rosters in the Sunday service, when people join our church, we often say, well, just take six months to get to know us and we need to get to know you and make sure you're comfortable here.

And then we get a sense of their character as well. Timothy is also to take care that he doesn't fall into the same sorts of sins himself, but keep himself pure, it says in verse 22.

Though in verse 23, Paul adds, it doesn't mean he has to be a teetotaler. For some people, it's a good idea never to drink alcohol because it's too easy for them to become addicted to it.

But in Timothy's case, it's actually a good idea because it seems he had a weak stomach, you know, he's prone to a bit of barley belly or whatever it was. But again, the point is, we're to honor elders with financial support and trust because scripture says so.

[23 : 08] And it's for our good anyway, for it enables elders and pastors to preach and teach God's word to you, which is the primary way God's spirit grows you, isn't it?

And lastly, we're to honor our masters because it protects God's name and gospel from slander. So point four, chapter six, verse one, all who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect so that God's name and our teaching, the gospel may not be slandered.

Now, slavery in the ancient world was not always as oppressive as the African-American slavery we're more familiar with. As sometimes people chose to become slaves to provide for themselves and their families, a bit like a job.

But it was still slavery and their masters could still easily abuse them. And yet, if they are Christian, Paul says, you're still to consider your master worthy of full respect.

Literally, you're still to honor your masters. Why? Well, so that God's name and gospel won't be slandered. But what does it mean to honor them?

[24 : 19] Well, it means to respect them and serve them faithfully. You know, doing your job. And we know this because of what Paul goes on to say in verse two when he talks about Christian masters.

He says, those who have believing or Christian masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are devoted to the welfare of their slaves. Notice in that last sentence, by the way, if you're a Christian boss, you're meant to look after the welfare of your employees. But Paul's main point is for slaves, those who are employees. And he says, if your boss is a Christian, don't disrespect them, which tells us the way to honor bosses is to respect them, isn't it? He also says to serve them even better, which tells us we're to serve all bosses, whether they're Christian or not.

But if they are Christian, we're to serve them even better. Why? Well, because they are dear fellow believers. In other words, they are God's family. And which brings us back to where we started.

[25 : 29] We've covered a lot of ground this morning. And not every group will apply to every person in this room, but it's worth asking, how am I going at honoring, you know, one another because we're family?

Or the widows and widowers because it pleases God? Or elders because scripture says so? Or bosses because it protects God's name and gospel from slander?

And Christian bosses because they're family. I started with the questions, does it matter how we treat one another? The answer is absolutely. And should we treat one another the same?

Well, in terms of honor, yes, but it will be expressed differently. And so as members of God's household, let's pray we would honor one another appropriately.

Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we thank you for these instructions to your church. Please help us to honor one another as members of your household appropriately.

[26 : 30] We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.