

Gospel-Shaped Care for God's Family

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 November 2024

Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0 : 00] Open your Bibles, if you would please, to 1 Timothy chapter 5. 1 Timothy chapter 5, if you're using the Pew Bible, it's on page 992.

And I would encourage you to follow along to be there with us in the Word of God, so you can see it for yourself. We are committed here to the primacy of the Word of God, its authority, its sufficiency. And so as we allow the Word of God to have its way in our lives, that's how we can not only know how to enjoy fellowship with God, but know how to please God from day to day.

And that will be a big part of what we're talking about from our passage this morning. But what is the church? What is the church? Throughout our course of time in looking through the book of 1 Timothy, we've seen kind of at the center of this little letter to Timothy in chapter 3, this call for the church to be the pillar and buttress of the truth.

And that's fleshed out in how the church behaves. That's fleshed out in how the church responds to the things the Word of God says. And so it's our duty, our responsibility, and even our joy to represent Christ through the way we live in obedience to His Word.

[1 : 24] So we've been talking about the healthy habits of a church. But the Bible gives us some descriptions of what a church is. It paints the picture in terms of metaphors so that we can get a better grasp of what God means when He talks about the church.

Metaphors such as the flock of God. Those sheep, as it were, that are under the care of the great shepherd. I'm reminded of what Jesus says in John chapter 10.

He says, My sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me. I give to them eternal life. They shall never perish. Neither shall anyone pluck them out of my hand. That relationship that we have as sheep to the tender, loving shepherd who leads us by still waters, who preserves our soul.

It helps us to understand what God means when He's talking about the church as a flock. We're also the bride of Christ. And we see from Ephesians chapter 5 the significance of that bride and her response to her husband.

This response of submission and obedience and respect that goes to her husband. And of course that respect and honor and obedience should go to God.

[2 : 42] And Jesus who is the perfect husband to His church. Who lays down His life for the bride. And that sacrificial love of Christ that was reflected to us on the cross.

And His continual ministry to us to sanctify us by the washing of the water by the word. And seeking to present us back to Himself this spotless bride.

This radiant bride. We see the apostle Peter speaks about the church as the temple. These living stones in 1 Peter chapter 2.

Coming to Him as to a living stone chosen by God and precious in His sight. And these living stones that are assembled together. It helps to describe how we relate to one another.

And describes the ultimate purpose that we have in terms of worship. Worshiping God and worshipping together. We're described as the vine in John chapter 15.

[3 : 48] A vine that gets its sustenance from... Or the branches that get its sustenance from the vine itself. Jesus who is that vine. We're the branches. And apart from the vine we can do nothing.

We're dead. And so our life depends upon the sustenance that we get from Christ. And we enjoy that indwelling work of the Spirit in our lives.

This morning we're going to come to the metaphor of the church being a family. The family of God. And the significance of being described that way as a family. That we're connected.

That there is relationship. There's meant to be some responsibility that we have to one another. As we relate to one another within this family that God has created.

The joy of having a relationship to God as Father. Being the children of God. And then to have this relationship that's almost too hard to imagine.

[4 : 48] That we are the brother of Christ. Jesus himself speaks of this in Luke. Where he says, My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.

So as we follow in the paths that have been set for us in the word of God. We enjoy that brotherly relationship. That family relationship even with God.

Paul describes this directly in his letter to the church of Ephesus in Ephesians chapter 2.19. Where he says, So then you are no longer strangers and aliens. But you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

You are part of God's family. And that has immense implications for us. Not only in how we relate to God. But how we relate to one another.

Love is meant to be this pervading, pervasive, all-consuming kind of quality that governs our responses to one another. Love that wants what's best for the members of this family.

[5 : 55] So in our passage today, we are going to get this really practical outworking of this family dynamic. And how we relate to one another.

How we seek to support and love the people that God has put us in community with. And what we're going to find is this description of the gospel. This gospel that is coming through loud and clear.

It's changed the hearts. It's shaped the people that follow after God. And it causes them to live a certain way. And so the family of God will take on this unique dynamic as the family responds to its head, its father.

My goal this morning is to kind of take this passage in two passes. I want to work through it and kind of give a little overview. So you can see how the gospel relates to the pieces of this text.

And then we're going to dive in and take it a little more in depth as we try to work out the details.

And understand the implications to our own day in life.

[7 : 03] First, we're going to see the gospel shapes our life as a family. The gospel will shape our life as a family. Let me read for us. 1 Timothy chapter 5 verses 1 and 2.

It says, Do you see it?

It's unmistakable, isn't it? The family dynamic. That God has put us in community with one another. That as we relate to one another, we show the wonder of this new family experience that we can enjoy.

Because of what Christ has accomplished for us. Paul has just instructed Timothy. He wants Timothy to know. And we saw this last week. He wants Timothy to know his role in helping to lead by example.

Back up just a few verses to chapter 4 verse 12. Notice. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers in example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

[8 : 18] And here, right at the outset of this next chapter, we're going to see two of those words show up. Speech and purity. Timothy, the way you relate to the family of God must be reflected in your speech.

It will shape your life by guiding the way you speak to one another. And the way they speak to each other as well. Your communication, your speech, your responses help to demonstrate that God has changed your life.

There's something entirely new about you. There's something different about you in how you speak. The implications that Paul gives just a couple of verses later in verse 16 of chapter 4.

He says, There are gospel implications.

There are eternal implications to the way we relate to one another. It demonstrates that something has fundamentally changed about who we are.

[9 : 29] There's a new posture in how we relate to the family of God. That coming to faith in Christ. Coming to recognize our sin. Coming to depend on the death and resurrection of Jesus.

And placing our faith in him alone for salvation. Asking forgiveness for our sins. And making him essentially the head of the family. And calling the shots for our life.

This is the way that we demonstrate that we belong to him. And there will be implications for how we live. Implications for how we love one another. It changes the way we relate to God.

And it changes the way we live and relate to God's family. Paul says, Timothy, don't rebuke an older man. This is a term that's mentioned only here in the New Testament.

And it refers to or describes this verbal pounding. This severe, harsh attitude and language. This authoritarian kind of response that is unacceptable.

[10:31] This sharpness. This rebuke. This violence that's coming through in how he speaks. Instead, Timothy, you need to be one who encourages. Encourage an older man.

Plead with them. Be willing to beg with them. Welcome them. Invite them into the things that are good for their life. Be a one that comes alongside.

That's the word parakaleo. The one who comes beside. A one who makes an appeal. Who encourages and admonishes. Who urges. As one who is urging and encouraging someone in authority.

Someone who's older. Why does Timothy speak this way? Well, Timothy speaks this way because they belong to the same family. To fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters.

That's how he's to see the church that he belongs to. And Paul has been faithful to kind of describe the church this way throughout this entire letter. And so going all the way back to chapter 1, we see the evidence of this kind of perspective from the apostle Paul.

[11:38] Just take a quick tour with me. Turn back to chapter 1. And I just want to show you a couple of ways in which Paul is describing this family relationship. Chapter 1 verse 2 he says, To Timothy, my true child in the faith.

Then to verse 9, Paul will use an example that speaks about the family. Understand this, that the law is not laid down for the just. But for the lawless and disobedient.

For the ungodly and sinner. For the unholy and profane. And then he uses this example for those who strike fathers and mothers. Timothy, the gospel will shape the way that the church responds to its family members.

Don't disassociate the two. The two are intertwined. And then for an elder in chapter 3, verses 4 and 5. He says, He must manage his household well with all dignity.

Keeping his children submissive. For if someone does not know how to manage his household. How will he care for God's church? Then for a deacon. Verse 12. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife.

[12:42] Managing their children and their own household well. And then in verse 14 and 15. I hope to come to you soon. But I'm writing these things. So that if I delay you may know how.

One ought to behave in the household of God. Which is the church of the living God. A pillar and buttress of the truth. And Paul throughout this letter will continue to use terms that relate to the church as brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers and family members.

And this household. To try to describe the interaction. The spiritual family that we've been placed into. Responsibility and privilege that we have. To love God by loving the people that God has put us in community with.

So when a person places their faith in Christ for salvation. It doesn't sever those family connections. But it grows it and expands it and strengthens it.

And broadens those family relationships. The significance of the church in family dynamics with one another. Is described well by Kevin DeYoung in his book.

[13:52] Where he says this in speaking specifically about singleness. He says singleness does not mean that you must live alone. Die alone. Never hold a hand. Never have a hug.

And never know the touch of another human being. If we ask the single Christian to be chaste. We can only ask them to carry that cross in community.

If God sets the lonely in families. So should we. Do we understand the significance of the family that God has placed us in community with?

And how instrumental that family is to help strengthen and preserve the members of the family. To live in a way that's pleasing to God. To help them.

To encourage them. To love them. To love them. We must show that we belong to one another. Not just on a Sunday morning or a Sunday night. Not just that we are meeting together randomly throughout the month.

[14:49] But that we're vested in a significant way. That we have life together. We see it as an integral to the process of our spiritual development. We see it as necessary.

As a vital way for us to grow. Not only in relationship to God. But in community with one another. So the gospel shapes the way we speak.

The gospel shapes the way we relate to one another. But the gospel also shapes the way we serve one another. And we see that in the remaining verses. I want to read this section of scripture.

And I just want to pull out a couple of pieces that relate to the gospel. You can probably identify them as we work our way through. And then we're going to come back at this and dig in a little bit deeper towards the end of this message.

Beginning in verse 3 it says this. Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren. Let them first learn to show godliness to their own households.

[15 : 51] And to make some return to their parents. For this is pleasing in the sight of God. She who is truly a widow. Left all alone. Has set her hope on God. And continues in supplication and prayer night and day.

But she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. Command these things as well. So they may be without reproach. But if anyone does not provide for his relatives.

And especially for members of his household. He is denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Let a widow be enrolled. If she is not less than 60 years of age. Having been the wife of one husband.

Having a reputation for good works. If she has brought up children. Has shown hospitality. Has washed the feet of the saints. Has cared for the afflicted. Has devoted herself to every good work. But refuse to enroll younger widows. For when their passions draw them away from Christ. They desire to marry. And so incur condemnation. For having abandoned their former faith.

[16 : 54] Besides that. They learn to be idlers. Going about from house to house. And not only idlers. But also gossips and busybodies. Saying what they should not. So I would have younger widows marry.

Bear children. Manage their households. And give the adversary. No occasion for slander. For some have already strayed after Satan. If any believing woman has relatives.

Who are widows. Let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened. So that it may care for those. Who are truly widows. There is a big passage of scripture.

But let me try to provide an overview. And provide some direct correlations. With how the gospel informs the way we live. And especially how the way we serve one another.

We're going to see this play out in two different ways. We're going to see how this plays out first. In the way we support our physical family. And then we're going to see how this plays out.

[17 : 54] In how we support and love and serve our spiritual family. Notice. The gospel implications for our service. Are pervasive throughout this passage.

When God changes us. God strengthens our commitment to one another. We're going to see that. In the priority that children and grandchildren have towards their family members.

We see that in verse 4. If a widow. Verse 4. Has children or grandchildren. Let them first learn to show godliness to their own household.

And to make some return to their parents. For this is pleasing in the sight of God. Do you see the gospel implications there? Do you see how the outworking of this mischief.

History of godliness that Paul has been talking about throughout this letter. Is now fleshing itself out in practical ways of loving their parents and grandparents.

[18 : 55] There is an active support. There is this show of godliness. There is this work of the gospel. That God has saved them. And created this new life in them. A new commitment.

A desire. A desire. To show godliness and support and service to their family. And when they do this. It says it is pleasing in the sight of God.

God is pleased. But if they don't do this. Verse 8. Helps us understand the other gospel implications. If anyone does not provide for his relatives. And especially for the members of his household.

He has denied the faith. And is worse than an unbeliever. We'll speak about that a little bit more in a moment. But you can see the massive gospel implications.

And how our response or lack of response to our family members. Demonstrates a lack of commitment to the gospel. There's also going to be a priority of widows for their family.

[19 : 53] Their physical family. Those widows have demonstrated their commitment. To their own family members. We see that in verse 9 and 10. Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than 60.

Having been the wife of one husband. There's this loyalty and fidelity that happens here. Having a reputation for good works. If she has brought up children.

A woman who has demonstrated a commitment to family. Her prioritization has been to raise children who love Jesus. Her character is exemplified in her home.

And that's why Paul gives such a strong instruction. Then to younger widows in verse 14. I would have younger widows marry. Their children manage their households. Give the adversary no occasion for slander.

Again this atmosphere of family. That young women and older women. Have the joy of investing in. To demonstrate their commitment. Not only to the Lord. But their commitment to raising godly generations.

[20 : 51] Second it impacts the way that we relate as a spiritual family. We see the priority of the church for the family of God. First Timothy 5.3 says.

Honor widows who are true widows. Don't turn your back on them. Don't push them away. Don't make them fend for themselves. Uphold your responsibility as a family member.

Just as someone who would be physically related. If there is no physical relation. Then the family of God needs to step in and provide that help. In verse 9.

Let a widow be enrolled. We'll speak about this a little bit more. But I think this is speaking specifically. Of the responsibility we have to support financially. These older widows.

But it's also a priority for widows to the church. What is their responsibility to the church? We see that in verse 5. She is who is a true widow.

[21 : 48] Left all alone. Has set her hope on God. And continues in supplication and prayer night and day. She is vested in her physical home. But also vested in her spiritual family.

We see that in verse 10. She has shown hospitality. Has washed the feet of the saints. Has cared for the afflicted. Has devoted herself to every good work. In contrast to the younger widow.

Who shows that her priorities are in the wrong place. In verses 11 and 12. Refused to enroll a younger widow. For when their passions draw them away from Christ. They desire to marry. And so incur condemnation.

For having abandoned their former faith. There are massive gospel implications. For how a church relates to widows. And how widows relate to the church.

The gospel changes everything. About how we interact as families. James will reinforce this in James chapter 1 verse 27.

[22 : 48] When he says religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father. Is this to visit orphans and widows in their affliction. And to keep oneself unstained from the world.

So you want your religion to be true. You want to show that God has sincerely changed your life. It will affect the way that you relate to the marginalized.

It will affect the way that you relate to those who are outcasts. Those who are pushed to the side. Those who are afflicted. Those who are in need. And those who then also meet the other qualifications that we see in this text.

So the way we speak. And the way we serve. Demonstrates our love for God. And reflects itself in how we respond in a gospel kind of way.

To the people in our family. Spiritual family. The gospel shapes our life. But the gospel also shapes our priorities. And that's where we go next.

[23 : 51] We're going to dig a little deeper. We're going to press in a little bit. Unpack this passage a little bit more. And seek to open this up and understand it a little fuller. It shapes our priorities as a family.

How this is different from the first point. How our life and priorities need to match this gospel perspective. And what I mean by priorities is.

It's not something casual. It's not something passive. It's not something non-essential. Not one of those things that just happens to happen.

Whenever the opportunity presents itself. We see it as vital. We see it as essential. We see it as something that we will pursue.

Something that we will do actively. It steers the way we live. It steers the priorities we make. It steers the way we spend our time.

[24 : 49] Spend our money. Spend our personal resources. We come to understand that a life together enhances our life with God.

I want to say that again. Because I think this is important for you to get. The way that we relate to one another. Demonstrates a commitment to a life together that enhances our life with God.

We come to a place of recognizing that whatever experiences we might have individually. Can never begin to even compare with the kinds of experiences we can have in community. The kinds of intimacy that we can enjoy with God together. We are going to see there is a priority. A priority that Paul will describe throughout this text.

This priority of honoring faithful widows. We see there in verse 3. Priority of honoring faithful widows. Notice. Honor widows who are truly widows.

[25 : 59] This word for honor is the word to show respect. To show support. To treat graciously. Being a widow. And you may understand this.

But being a widow in the first century was hard. It was not just lacking companionship. But it was lacking a means of support.

A means of security. A means of standing within the community. In many instances a woman's identity. Her dignity were bound up in her husband and her family.

This advocacy that she would have enjoyed. This voice in the community. And when those things are not present. This woman would experience extreme loneliness.

Or at least she could. But as a part of a family. Both physical and spiritual. We have the joy. And responsibility of honoring true faithful widows.

[26 : 59] So which widows are we to honor and encourage in this way? How do we honor them? And what is the call? What's the instruction for us in this passage?

This passage describes three ways that we should honor widows. First. We honor them by supporting them financially. Honor widows by supporting them financially.

We see that in verse 3 and 4. Honor widows who are truly widows. If a widow has children or grandchildren. Let them first learn to show godliness to their own households.

And to make some return to their parents. For this is pleasing in the sight of God. Those who have the first responsibility of demonstrating honor to their parents and grandparents.

Are the children and grandchildren themselves. It's a way for children to say. We appreciate you. It's a way for children and grandchildren to express their dependence on the Lord.

[28 : 02] To show their generosity. To share their resources. To grow in their faith. To lay up treasures in heaven. To strengthen the family ties that God designed through that physical family.

And I know that some of your backgrounds and some of your upbringings were very, very difficult. And you didn't have faithful parents perhaps. And you grew up in homes where moms or dads were not the picture of godliness.

And they weren't even a picture of kindness. And yet the responsibility that God has given to children and grandchildren. Is to transcend and overcome those barriers.

The mercy that we have received from God begins to flow and to spill out. And to shine itself or show itself on your family members.

It's a way for you to show Christ. Even to those who do not know Christ. This picture and portrait of the gospel. Shining through this mercy of God.

[29 : 09] Evidence to those who deserve or don't deserve this kindness. Care for family was built in to the fabric of the first century.

It was, there were many Greek philosophers from the early BC periods. That established these principles.

It was understood by first century what the expectation was. So that by the time of Salon. Who was not only a statesman. But also a philosopher.

In 630 BC. He said that sons and daughters were not only morally. But also legally bound to support their parents.

Anyone who refused that duty lost his civil rights. End quote. Demosthenes who was another philosopher in 384 to 322 BC.

[30 : 05] Says, I regard the man who neglects his parents. As unbelieving and hateful to the gods. Lowercase. As well as to men. Philo.

Who was writing commandment to honor parents. Says, When old storks become unable to fly. They remain in their nests. And are fed by their children. Who go to endless exertions to provide their food because of their piety.

So whether it was inherent in the way that family related to one another. Or even as it related to creation itself. It was built into the first century.

This expectation of caring for one's family members. But care for the elderly today. Especially those who are outside of the church.

Many of you know it's a very lonely world. The number of times I've been to a nursing home. Or the number of times that I've been to somebody's house.

[31 : 03] And I've seen the loneliness of those who are elderly. And they have been forsaken by their kids. They've been forsaken by their relatives. And it is a life of extreme loneliness.

But the church not only has the responsibility. But also the joy of demonstrating care. And service. And support.

To their family. It should not only be the case for the physical body. But also for the spiritual body. The spiritual family.

Our love for families reflects our love for God. It says in verse 4. Let them learn to show godliness to their own household.

It is an issue of godliness. This word for godliness is the word worship. To fulfill one's duties. To put religion into practice. By showing care for our families.

[32 : 01] We demonstrate that we love God. That we worship God. That God is ultimate for us. Paul will use this word godly throughout his letter.

Up to this point. It is a huge theme for him. In helping the church to recognize. That godliness isn't isolated. That godliness is interactive. It demonstrates a changed heart in life.

In its posture towards the world outside. Even Jesus cared for his mother. In the moment of his greatest suffering. Jesus on the cross.

Looks at his mother at the foot of the cross. Looks at the beloved apostle John. And he says in John 19.26. John. Behold your mother.

Mother. Behold your son. The tenderness of Christ. And the care of Christ. Even for his physical mother. In his moment of greatest suffering.

[33 : 01] Demonstrated his commitment. To godliness. This outworking and show. Of true spirituality. That showed forth in Christ himself. And must also show up in ourselves.

As we walk in his steps. But it's also pleasing in the sight of God. It's acceptable. It's pleasing. This concept is used throughout the New Testament. It's right to seek God's pleasure.

It's right to pursue God's joy. It's right to love God's affirmation. And to seek that affirming statement.

Well done thou good and faithful servant. And when we honor our parents. We honor God. There's this command that we see now in verse 7.

Command these things as well. So that they may be without reproach. And so the encouragement is accompanied by a command as well.

[33 : 59] There is some force behind. And urgency behind this invitation. The implication that we find in verse 8. If anyone does not provide for his relatives.

And especially for the members of his household. He has denied the faith. And is worse than an unbeliever. This word has denied the faith. Has a huge range of meaning.

And in this instance. I believe that when Paul is talking about denied the faith. Basically he's speaking. You've turned your back on the things that the faith would call you to do.

You know better. You've learned better. You've received better. You've enjoyed the benefits of the investment. And the blessings poured out from you.

From God. You know what the faith requires. And you're turning your back on the things. That should be absolutely clear to you. Worse than that. You are now acting in a way.

[34 : 58] That isn't even in harmony. With what the culture has said is expected. You're acting worse than an unbeliever. You're discrediting. And bringing dishonor to the gospel.

You should know better. Don't deny the faith. Don't turn your back on the things that you know are right. And then there is this encouragement for the church.

We find in verse 9. Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than 60 years of age. This enrollment is related to support. We find in this passage that talks about financial support.

This enrolled likely refers to these widows who now are on the roll as it were. They've met these requirements. They've poured their life out. They've invested in the church.

And now at 60 years old. Now the church can help invest in them. Honor them by supporting them. Next we honor them by recognizing their exemplary life.

[36 : 00] We see that in verses 5 and 6. It says, She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.

But she who is self-indulgent is dead while she lives. Honor true widows by recognizing the marks of their character.

By the way, I just want to take a quick detour and encourage you ladies, at the beginning of next year, in January, there's going to be a connect group about womanhood, biblical womanhood. I would encourage you to take part in that. It's called True Women 101. Some of you may have taken it already, but this is an opportunity to build some relationships and understand what the scripture says about womanhood and to seek to exemplify the same kinds of marks that we'll see here in our passage this morning.

This true widow was not simply a woman whose husband was dead, but a woman who was left alone. She had no family members. But even more than that, she was a woman especially who set her hope on God.

[37 : 20] Notice there in verse 5. That is the clarion call of her life. This is the foundation that steadies her. This is where her hope is found.

It's found in God, and she has actively and deliberately and consistently trusted in God to help in times of dire need. She's a woman who you can count on to know God and to trust God. She's the kind of woman we read about in 1 Peter chapter 113. Therefore, preparing your minds for action, be sober-minded. Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

She is one who has learned to trust in God. One who has learned to find her hope and confidence and fulfillment in Him.

Now we get to the tangible pieces of what her life looks like in verses 9 and 10. Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than 60 years of age, having been the wife of one husband, having a reputation for good works, if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, has devoted herself to every good work.

[38 : 40] Wow! Now that's a woman who loves God. As a woman, you wonder, how in the world can any of us even, regardless of whether you're a man or a woman, how could you ever measure up to that kind of standard?

This woman who has devoted herself to supplication and prayer that we see in verse 5. It's reminiscent of Anna, who was in the temple day and night in Luke chapter 2, invested her widowhood in things that were tangible.

This is a woman who is not self-indulgent. She's not luxurious. She's not a lover of money. She's learned to share. She's learned to be generous. She's been the wife of one husband.

There's been loyalty and fidelity in her marriage. She has good works in verse 10. Brought up faithful children, shown hospitality, served others.

She's shown compassion by caring for the afflicted. She is a woman who has vested in her family, physical family, and also vested in her spiritual family.

[39 : 48] This is a woman who's demonstrated her love for God in her love for others. So we're to honor them by supporting them. Honor them by recognizing their example.

And finally, honor widows by calling them to godliness. Honor widows by calling them to godliness. We see that here in verse 11 through 13.

Refuse to enroll a younger widow. For when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry, and so incur condemnation. For having abandoned their former faith.

Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house. And not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.

Now we don't know the specifics of what Paul is referring to, or how this is playing out in the church of Ephesus. But I think every single one of us can understand that when we have nothing to do, nothing to occupy our time, the true desires of our heart begin to find its vent and to express itself in forms of life that are contrary to the things of God.

[41 : 02] When we choose not to do the things that God loves, that are pleasing to God, we tend to find ourselves walking in a way that is divergent from God.

That's why I love the instruction that Paul will give to the church of Rome. He says, abstain from all appearances of evil. He says something to the effect, and I can't remember the exact verse, it just escaped me.

He says, don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Don't become, don't be overcome by evil. Overcome evil with good.

Establish a pattern of life that is investing in, that is pouring out, that is walking by obedience. All of us can understand that idleness of our life tends to lead to things that we are ashamed of at the end of the day.

These passions that the Apostle Paul refers to here are the things that they fill their life with, these sensual desires that overcome their dedication. In this case, it led to them being busybodies.

[42 : 12] It led to them flitting from one house to the other. It led to them interacting in some ungodly way through gossip and slander, the stories that they could be a part of and then spread throughout the city of Ephesus.

They were significant enough that they drew them away from Christ. They were significant enough that we find in verse 15 that there even says, some have strayed after Satan.

These were significant pieces of their life and the reason for it was because they hadn't been disciplined enough to invest. They've allowed the idleness of their life.

They allowed themselves, at least in this case, they were supported to create these openings for their activity that were displeasing to the Lord.

Paul's encouragement to them in verse 14 was, I would have the young widows marry, bear children, manage their households, give the adversary no occasion for the slanderer.

[43 : 16] And so in Paul's response to the inactivity that was taking place was find a way to invest, find a way to be busy, find a way to build for kingdom purposes, get married, have a family.

They should marry. I want younger widows to marry. That's his desire. Find ways to invest in kingdom living. Find ways to build your family, your spiritual family.

As we come to the end of this, we come to understand that we need to treat our spiritual family and our physical family in a way that's consistent with the gospel.

This not only provides assurance for our salvation, but this provides this beautiful gospel picture of what God has accomplished for us in salvation.

I want to provide just a few practical ways to put this passage into practice. Okay? Just a few practical ways and then we'll finish. First, I want to encourage you to all be part of the powerhouse prayer every single week.

[44 : 26] Pastor David puts that together. He spends a lot of time. There are a number of people in our church week by week who desperately need your prayers. And I could give you a list right now, but for fear of missing somebody, I'm just going to decline.

Read the powerhouse prayer. Invest in the people in your spiritual family. I might encourage you, month by month, meet someone new.

Look across this room. Go ahead and do that right now. Is there somebody in this family that you don't recognize? Meet a person once a month.

Make a connection. Understand they are part of you and you are part of them. Next, invite someone into your home. Practice hospitality.

Hospitality is a great way for us to enter in to real tangible relationship over food, over coffee, over s'mores, whatever it is.

[45 : 32] This very informal way of engaging the family of God and building family relationships. We had the joy as a family just this past week to be able to go over to someone's home.

What a special privilege that was. I would commend that to you. Next, if you're older, I would encourage older people to adopt younger people in the church.

Encourage them. Pray for them. Younger people are living in an age of absolute unrealistic expectations.

They need the steady, affirming, consistent care and support and love of the older community. They need you.

They need you to thrive in a very broken world. Can I encourage you to find a younger person and make them part of your family?

[46 : 33] Younger people, I want to encourage you to adopt an older person. I want you to encourage them because sometimes they're at a walk of life where they don't think that anyone really cares about what their life experiences and let me tell you, they have so much to offer you as it relates to wisdom and personal experience and kindness.

Younger people, invest in the older community. Listen to their story. Take an interest in God's work in their life. See the visible kinds of stories that they can tell you to affirm that God is not only real but God is faithful.

Make yourself available to serve them. Finally, be generous. Be generous and share and give. We have the joy as the family of God to enjoy the benefits of community togetherness and as we are active and deliberate of strengthening those ties we not only enhance our intimacy and relationship with God and with one another but we show a beautiful picture of the gospel.

May God help us to do better at this. Let me pray. Lord, thank you for this word this morning. This very practical word of not only how we should care for widows but especially Lord as we just need to care for the body the family that you put us within and God I pray that you would help us not to just walk out of here and not take this to heart but to recognize the seriousness of how this relates to the mystery of godliness that as we show this kind of care we demonstrate that we belong to you and in addition we also please you.

May we walk in a way that causes delight and joy to you in Jesus name amen. God bless you. Have a great week.