

Series	Gamma 17 – Study 9 (Widows and Elders)
Reference	1 Tim 5
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Good evening, brothers and sisters. Welcome back to Gamma, our study of the pastoral epistles looking at Study 9 today. Widows and elders, what do they have in common?

Now we're looking at chapter five today, let us start off with the first two verses,

1 Timothy 5:1-2 (ESV) Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

So basically what Timothy is now advised by Paul or instructed by Paul is relationship within the church. How do we relate to one another in church? We don't simply talk down to people or scold people. The whole idea is to encourage, the word is encourage as you would a father and here you actually have the word encouragement in terms of different ways in which you handle people who are related to you in church. Older man, you would treat him like your father. Younger man, as your brother. Older women as your mother and sisters in all purity, which means none of that sexual connotation. So basically, the nature of relationships in the church is that of a family and that is different from where we are dealt with in communities, in leadership structures, in corporations. 1 Timothy 5:3 where Peter actually explains to leaders.

1 Peter 5:3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

So here the ground is level at the foot of the cross. At the foot of the cross, every single person is the same. We're saved not because of our own merit but because of what Christ has done and so therefore the basis in which we actually relate to each other is based on family.

Mark 3:33-35 And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

So here we are to serve one another by encouraging each other in a manner which would treat each other as a family. And the young minister we talked about the last Gamma study, Carl Lenz. These are some of the testimonies from the volunteers who worked under him and they were instructed.

"Don't talk to him, don't look at him, don't be in his way."

"If you complain, you'll keep cleaning toilets. If you don't complain, you can climb the ladder."

That's horrific. Isn't it? A pastor handling himself in such a way but basically he thinks he is actually above other people. So this is not how we are to live and work as servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Caring for widows. Now here, we have got a whole branch of instructions about caring for widows,

1 Timothy 5:3-6 (ESV) Honor widows who are truly widows. 4 But if a widow 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. 5 She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, 6 but she who is self-indulgent is

dead even while she lives.

The word is honor. Honor in Greek is Timao and it means to give respect, acknowledge a person status and also it is always tied to financial aid, which is why when you read,

1 Tim 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor,

Not only respect, it also is financial remuneration as many of these elders or pastors were actually in full-time for example. So there is a financial program going in the church in Ephesus because 1-Timothy 5 says,

1 Timothy 5:11 (ESV) But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry

So there is a role, there is a program in which you are supposed to be enrolled.

1 Timothy 5:16 (ESV) 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

So there is a financial program of the Ephesians church we can learn from. And then you have a series of readings here

1 Timothy 5:3 1 Timothy 5:3-5 (ESV) Honor widows who are truly widows.

5 She who is truly a widow...

16b Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

Now it is a bit of funny here. You are either a widow or you are not a widow. Either way, is Paul talking about fake widows? There are two kinds of widows here. Eligible widows and ineligible widows. The argument here isn't about whether the person is widow or not, whether fake widow or not. It's basically whether, because the church has limited financial resources, church should not be burdened. So therefore there are two kinds of widows, they are either eligible for financial aid, or you're not eligible for financial aid, two kinds of widows. That's why it says truly widows.

So the ones who are eligible for financial aids are the ones who have got no family members or no relatives at all to look after them, who are basically the destitute, the really poor. There was a story told in the Xinhua website on January 30th 2012 of an old gentleman, He Daxing who actually has six children and his daughter in law sent him to live with the last daughter that he has, which is the six of the children. And he went there and the last daughter didn't even want to have him enter the house. She kept him outside for four days and three nights in the cold, and it came out in the newspaper "Octogenarian sleeps outside daughter's doorway".

Horrible situation in China where people now do not look after the elderly. You might want to watch a beautiful movie called "A Simple Life" where it tells a story of Ah Tao who is basically acted by Deanie Ip who basically is an elderly lady who has looked after four generations of a particular Chinese family and the last of the generations acted as Roger, acted by Andy Lau. It showed how she was so devoted to the family until the last member of family, the fourth generation, Andy Lau and then she had a stroke and how the two of them, how Andy Lau actually showed filial piety even to Ah Tao and basically looked after Ah Tao and yet Ah Tao still love Roger so much that she didn't want to be helped. She didn't want to be a burden to Andy Lau. So there is a very beautiful picture of filial piety. Even though Ah Tao was not the actual relative of Andy Lau, but it shows us how people should be treated. So if you got a chance

to try to watch this movie.

Now we're talking about financial filial responsibility.

1 Timothy 5:4 But if a widow 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.

So Paul is saying we actually all have financial filial responsibility because it make some return to their parents. Parents don't bring you up and get nothing in return. And when children look after their parents financially, this is pleasing in the sight of God. And this is the essence of Chinese filial piety. I think Chinese people, majority of the church will have no trouble understanding this. It is a basic command in Bible, Deuteronomy chapter 5 verse 16,

Deuteronomy 5:16 (ESV) Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Now, notice this biblical command, biblical honor. Biblical honor is non-contingent. It doesn't matter whether they are difficult. It doesn't matter whether they treated you well. It doesn't matter whether they betrayed you or whether they deserve it or not. The command is God's command and then you honor your father and mother simply because God commanded it.

Ephesians 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

Children are to obey their parents in the Lord, which means according to the requirements of the Lord, as God would have wanted you to do, we are to obey our parents and.

The Confucius idea of filial piety is based on this,

"Today's filial piety, who is able to keep? As dogs and horses, which we own and nurture, can we allow them to be disrespectful?"

So therefore Confucius is saying, there is an order in society, just like dogs and horses which you own and nurture, can we allow them to be disrespectful because we own and nurture them they have to be respectful to us. So that's the basis of filial piety.

Let's compare biblical honor versus filial piety.

Biblical honor is based on who God is. Filial piety is based on who man is. Biblical honor is based on who God is that he is the father of the fatherless protector of widows. So we honor our parents simply because we belong to God and God protects widows. Filial piety is based on ethical considerations. See if you're Confucius, you believe that people are innately good and filial piety is part of the natural conscience of men. Piety originates from the ethical man, which is the paradigm of honor, which is basically the Confucius understanding that everybody should act in an honorable way.

Biblical honor believes that people are not innately good. Men is innately sinful and obeying God's command to love him and the neighbor extends to biblical honor to our parents. It is part of obeying God's command to love God and neighbor and honor originates from the love of God. It is God

centered whereas filial piety is man centered, so therefore men has to worship the ancestors. So we actually have financial support. It's part of it as Paul says, to make some return to their parents for this is pleasing the sight of God.

Number two,

1 Timothy 5:8 (ESV) But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

I don't think Paul means that you will lose your salvation but you have acted in such a way that you are a disgrace to the faith for which you profess. You are worse than a non-Christian, because non-Christians especially Chinese in this country will not be the ones refusing financial support to their own mothers or fathers or relatives. If you look at ancient Chinese literature, they actually focus on this too.

"The slaughter of cattle as a worship to ancestors is not as good as honoring them while they are alive and feeding them with chicken meat and bread." Gu Yin Zeng

So no point killing cattle and worshipping ancestor when they're dead, when you should have been alive when they were life feeding or a chicken and bread.

"Eating a raw pea in life is better than eating a pig after death." Chinese Proverb

So this idea of ancestral worship is part of Confucius idea and what we can do is that we don't worship our ancestors, but we may remember them and give thanks to God for them.

Secondly, biblical honor includes submission, obeying and that means understanding their needs, what they are thinking, their fears, obeying their wishes, but not indulge or give into sin in their lives, as some of the wishes are sinful. We also remember that we need to be cognizant of the changes of age, how it changes the way they think, they may be deceived. They may be unreasonable and we need to submit or obeyed him in that kind of context, not giving into the every women fancy. And lastly, we need to show them respect.

You remember the story of Noah. Eight of them saved through the arch and right after the arch was saved, he had a great time. He indulged in wine, was drunk, became naked. His son Ham couldn't even be bothered. His other two sons took up a bed sheet and they walked backwards. They didn't look at his nakedness and they covered him. They showed him respect. So we need to show respect and financial responsibility to all parents. We need to submit to them and we need to respect them and finally we need to share the gospel with them because that is the greatest gift where we could share with any of our parents.

Now let's look at the two kinds of widows. There are the eligible widows, which basically have nobody, no family members and they are in financial need. Ineligible widows are ones with family members and who have got no financial needs as well. Eligible widows are the ones who are godly and over 60 years of age, ineligible widows are self-indulgent and under 60 years of age. This is basically a generalization, it is not a specific kind of injunction that we have to follow automatically. If you're 59, you can't get any help, even though you're alone. It's a general guideline.

Here are godly widows.

1 Timothy 5:5 (ESV) She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in

supplications and prayers night and day,

1 Timothy 5:9-10 Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, 10 and 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, and has devoted herself to every good work.

So basically the widows that are supported by church are actually godly widows. The ungodly widows, they could be over the age of 60 but you may not want to support them as self-indulgent, which means they only think about indulging their every whim and fancy and desire

1 Timothy 5:11-12 (ESV) But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry 12 and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith

We are not saying that it is wrong for younger widows to marry, but they marry in such a way that they abandon their former faith, which means they must have married unbelievers. It is not written here, but it is behind the scenes because when they marry, they actually abandon their former faith.

Not only that, these are ungodly widows, they learn to be idlers, go house to house, not only idlers but they gossip, busybody, saying things about other people. Never say good thing. They always say, if you want to pick faults in church, there are plenty of faults because everybody is a sinner. So, you pick on this and pick on that. As long as the sins that you don't have, so that you could actually pick a name and feel good about yourself. So they are gossiping and they are busy bodies,

1 Timothy 5:14 So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. 15 For some have already strayed after Satan.

Which means because of this some of these ungodly widows have actually abandoned their faith. So this advice for younger widows to marry, bear children and manage household is basically contextual at that particular culture, it's culturally relevant. Paul is not saying that every younger widow has got to marry. They can't run the company or go to work. All right. It's more than widows when you apply this.

If you look in the Old Testament, loving God and loving your neighbour.

Deuteronomy 14:28-29 (ESV) At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. 29 And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

So they are supposed to look after the Levite, the Sojourner, the fatherless and the widow.

Deuteronomy 27:19 (ESV) Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

There are always sojourners which is the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. So at the end of the fields, there are part of the crops that are not harvested. They are always left for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. These are lowest of the lowest, the most oppressed and poor of society, we need to look after them.

James 1:27 (ESV) 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 true authentic spirituality is not just looking after widows. It is orphans and fatherless, whoever is in need, if you are a true believer, if grace has transformed your life that would be attested by good works and good works are actually looking after the defenceless and the oppressed and the marginalized in our society, no matter who they are. This is actually how we are going to be judged because this passage in Matthew 25 says

Matthew 25:38-40 (ESV) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? 40 And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

And my brothers are whom members of the family of God. It didn't matter whether they deserved it or didn't deserve it in a sense there is kindness shown. We need to be showing kindness.

Now the last bit is managing the church.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 (ESV) Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

Which means in those days they've got the muzzle the ox going around pulling that contraption that actually crushes the grain, while he is doing that you shouldn't stop him from eating. The labourer, deserves his wages. And Paul says this as much in 1 Corinthians chapter nine

1 Corinthians 9:12-14 (ESV) Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right (that means the right to be paid), but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. 13 Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? 14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

So which means there is a right where people who have given up their secular careers and who have decided to serve God in this way. They actually have a right to get their living by the gospel.

Lastly, discipline of elders, sin must be confronted,

1 Timothy 5:19-20 (ESV) Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 20 As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

So there are some principles involved here.

1. Multiple witnesses before you accuse a church leader. Don't just have hear say, actual witness and had this document.
2. Not an occasional sin but those who persist in sin which is the unrepentant after you have spoken to them.
3. If that doesn't work you have got public rebuke, but this rebuke must be preceded by private personal confrontation.
4. Public rebuke must be carried out if personal overtures are rebuffed. If they don't listen to you, you have got to go in public and basically rebuke them.

5. The reason why Paul wants Timothy to do this is the purpose is to instil a healthy fear in the church, so that sin will not be rampant especially at the level of the leadership.

And Timothy is to do this fairly and to be accountable to God. So he is not just targeting people

1 Timothy 5:21-22 (ESV) In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

There are some people in church you don't like, who said things against you or disparate you or you look down at you. You are not supposed to judge them, prejudging, doing nothing from partiality but accountable to God.

22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands (which means simply appointing leaders), nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure ...24. The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. 25 So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

So avoid rushing into appointment of leaders because you need time to assess them, because sooner or later good works or bad works, character good or bad will come out. So don't rush into basically appointing leaders here and there. Lastly,

1 Timothy 5:23 (ESV) 23 (No longer drink only water but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)

Which means Paul actually asked Timothy to take wine, in those days was considered as a medicine. So this is how the church deals with people who are marginalized and widows and also the discipline of elders. I hope this has been a blessing to all of us. I'll see you in the next Study 10. May God add a blessing to all of us as we study his word and let it change our lives.