

Things Every Man Needs to Know

We've been talking about gender, God's plan for creation, relationships... all of that. Some of the most pressing questions that this topic presents have to do with romantic and marriage relationships. Pastor Mike is diving into that and answering some of those questions with his sermons, but with Mike on vacation the next two weekends, Scott and I are going to address the implications that God's Word has on our non-romantic and non-sexual relationships and how gender influences those as well.

In a culture where gender distinctions are being minimized and even eliminated, one thing you may not even realize is the impact that is having on how we relate to each other in our other (non-romantic/sexual) relationships. I think the fallout of not wanting to acknowledge any real difference between male and female is that we are not teaching men how to be men, or women how to be women, and how to relate to each other appropriately. Young men are growing up without a clue about what it means to be a young man, or an older man, and have no plan for how to develop the appropriate behaviors and character traits that characterize a mature man (Christian or not). Ladies have the same problem.

With all of the confusion about gender, sexuality, marriage, and everything else that is going around right now, I think there is also less emphasis on and attention being paid to how we relate to each other across gender and generations. In other words, we're not talking about the issues introduced here in this passage by Paul when he instructs the young pastor, Timothy, on how to relate to older men, younger men, older women and younger women. Just as God has assigned distinct and different roles to men and to women, He also has expectations of how we should relate to those of different generations. Both are mentioned here. I'm not talking about whether a kid should play with Barbie dolls or G.I. Joe's, or whether that child should have grass-stained jeans or a pretty dress. I'm talking about things much larger than that. Gender is so much more than how you dress, or whether or not you have facial hair. Every human being, whether male or female, from the time they are old enough to think such thoughts, is asking themselves, "what does it mean to be ME?," "What am I supposed to do?," "How should I act?," and "How should I think?" Whether you know it or not, you've been asking yourself those questions for as long as you have been thinking. Historically, families have provided an environment where those questions were generally being answered. Now, that's not to say they were always answered in the correct way or even in a healthy way, but they were answered. Today, we are seeing young people growing up in an environment that more and more is not even attempting to answer those questions. We are calling this progress and pretending that we are freeing children up to finally be whatever they want to be.

The problem is that we are not designed to develop this way, and the children that are growing up in this environment are suffering the consequences. Take, for a moment, everything the Bible says about this off the table and look at this from a purely secular perspective. If you are honest, you will observe that this supposed freedom to decide for yourself and to figure out for yourself what it means to be YOU has left an entire generation completely lost. The results are beginning to show, and it's not a pretty picture. What we, as a society, hoped would liberate the next generation has actually deeply wounded them and left them searching in all the wrong places for answers to their most basic questions.

Now, let's go back to the Bible and see that God already knew this. What we as a society are learning the hard way, God told us long before we entered into this costly social experiment. Now, society as a whole is probably still a long way off from even beginning to realize the truth of all of this, I guess. I'm not much of a sociologist, so I wouldn't even try to predict what will happen next. However, I can tell you what I see happening and that is that we are suffering the consequences of secular humanism, and the answer for the church is to stand our ground and keep teaching and walking in the light of Scripture.

What that means for us today is that it deeply matters whether you are male or female, and that we have a responsibility to faithfully teach each other what that means and how to answer the questions that we are naturally asking ourselves about what it means to be ME.

Now, that does not mean that we are attempting to take away anyone's individual freedom to choose to answer those important questions any way they decide. Every individual human being has absolute freedom to choose to accept or reject what the Bible says is true. I'm not talking about taking away anyone's freedom to make that decision for themselves. What I AM saying is that, though it may seem counterintuitive to some degree, not teaching young people how to answer those questions they have about themselves from a biblical point of view is actually the thing that does them the most damage. This book contains truth about who we are, why we are here, and how we should think and act. Depriving human beings of those answers is ultimately destructive to them in every way.

With those answers in hand and with that truth in your mind, you can choose to do whatever you like with that information. You can say, "Heck with that! I don't like it!" and go live however you want. That's your choice. You won't find freedom outside of that truth, nor will you find satisfaction or your true purpose. You won't experience eternal life, but that's your choice. I'm not talking about taking that choice away.

I feel like I needed to say all of that because we live in a culture where telling people what to believe, especially what to believe about themselves, is considered to be wrong. I'm saying that the opposite is true. Not telling the next generation how the Bible answers the questions they are asking themselves is hurting them. Therefore, I want to encourage us to speak up and teach the truth to each other, knowing all the while, anyone can choose for themselves to accept or reject those truths.

Male-centered sermon alert: Women, look for the character of God in this passage. Listen for hints at how much God loves you and values you. Learn how to pray for and encourage the men (young and old) in your life!

So, with that as our introduction, let's look at what the Word tells us:

1 Timothy 5:1-2

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.

Timothy was a close companion of Paul's, and participated in several ministry endeavors with him. Paul was his mentor and a spiritual father to him. Paul entrusted the Ephesian church to Timothy's pastoral leadership and writes him the letter of 1 Timothy to provide instruction to him personally.

One of the greatest gifts a young man can receive is spiritual father and mentor who both loves him and teaches him the truth. Timothy had this in Paul, and I would be willing to bet that these letters from Paul were among his most cherished possessions on earth. I say that because I've been fortunate enough to have similar relationships. When I was in college, one of my professors took on this role in my life, and became a spiritual father to me. I'm talking about Darren Hileman, my youth ministry professor. We call him PD, short for Professor Darren. I was a young Christian and needed a lot more than just classes on church history and bible knowledge. I needed to know how to live as a man of God, how to find a wife and date appropriately, how to treat my future wife, how to raise my children, and so on. Much of what I've done right in this area is the result of how that man (along with my biological father, of course) taught me to live. The things I've done wrong are the result of my own laziness and sinfulness. Not only did he teach me in the classroom how to live, but he brought me into his home and showed me what that looked like in his life. He let me see

the results of what he was teaching me, and the impact that it was having on his wife and children. He never stopped investing in me. Today, we don't talk often, but when we do, he keeps building me up and pouring into me. He told me years ago that we're now brothers on the same level, but that's a lie. He'll always be a spiritual father to me.

That is what Timothy had in Paul, a spiritual father. Those are priceless. Biological fathers are obviously a pretty big deal, but I don't have time to get into that. Spiritual fathers, though, are extremely valuable. In fact, sometimes your biological dad will be both for you. That's probably ideal, but not always the case.

Anyhow, Paul writes to Timothy these instructions:

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.

Notice the familial language. **Fellow members of the body of Christ are family, and should always be treated as such.**

The Gospel- We are separated from God by our sin, but Jesus went to the Cross to pay for our sins. By trusting in him, we can be saved and brought into the family of God.

John 1:12¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

If you've believed and trusted in Jesus, then you are part of the family, and Scripture addresses us as members of God's family. We see that here in Paul's expectation of how we should relate to each other.

Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father.

Paul tells Timothy to treat older men as fathers. Clearly, he is meaning for him to show them respect. Timothy is in a position as a pastor where he is going to need to correct men who are older than he is. That's a difficult position to be in, and could go erroneously in one of two directions: Timothy could arrogantly and pridefully rebuke those older men and be in sin, OR he could fearfully and timidly avoid correcting such men and not fulfill his obligations as a pastor. Paul offers him a third way: encourage them as you would a father; respectfully point out to them what you see in a way that encourages them and lets them know that you are there to build them up, not to usurp them in arrogance.

How does this relate to men who are not pastors? It's the same. Younger men, respect the older men in your life, and encourage them as you would a father. Show them the respect they deserve, and when you are in a position where you need to point out a fault, do it with humility and gentleness. But in general, just respect older men. They've fought more battles than you. They've carried the burdens of this life longer than you have. They deserve respect. Don't deal disrespectfully with the older men in your life, but rather learn from them and encourage them. Talk a little less and listen a little more. Of course, you should evaluate what they say and hold it up to the truth revealed in Scripture. It's possible that they could be in sin, and you should not follow those patterns and behaviors. But in general, your default should be to yield to their experience and show them respect, hoping to learn from them.

What I take away from Paul's instruction here, and what I want to say to every other man here is this: **Men, make a constant effort to see the good in every man older than you and to treat them with respect.**

Next, we are told to encourage younger men as brothers.

Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers.

One of the things that PD taught was about having what he calls “relational walls.” He would use the image of a brick wall to illustrate this. In a brick wall, you have layers of bricks on top of each other, right? If you put yourself in the middle of the wall, then you have bricks above you, bricks beside you, and bricks under you. In your relationships, you need people further down the road than you are, people older and more spiritually mature than you who are to help you and call you to greater maturity. You also have and need your peers, people who are more or less where you are and running the race with you. And then you have, or should have, people who are younger and/or less spiritually mature than you that you are encouraging and exhorting to run the race.

Paul reminds us to encourage younger men as brothers, not to look down on them or to be overly harsh on them, or to belittle them because they are younger. Instead, we are to engage them in a positive way and help them grow. We need to reach down to them and pull them up. Some of them might resist, but we should not let that cause us to be afraid of them. Rather, we need to encourage them and rejoice when they do well.

Men, find some bros who will run alongside you to keep you accountable and help you run. AND find some guys younger or less spiritually mature than you and pour into them.

No man runs this race well alone. We all need someone in our life who we can count on. Furthermore, the guys younger or less mature than you need you to pour into them. Reach out a hand. Encourage them. Pull them up to where you are. Be an example for them to follow. Help the younger men in your lives know what it means to be a man of God, and show them what that looks like in your life.

Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

Encourage older women as mothers. Now, obviously Paul is drawing on the natural, familial relationships we have, and he has in mind the times we get those relationships right. All of us, at some point, don't treat our parents or siblings the way we should, but the word of God tells us here to encourage older women as mothers.

I've always had a good relationship with my mom. She's a rock star! She introduced me to Jesus when I was young. I never forgot what she taught, and when I was 16, and finally ready to surrender to Christ, I knew exactly what to do because she had taught me. In those early years of being a Christian, it was my mom that I would often turn to for encouragement and support. And because we've always been close, I've always had a pretty good front-row seat for the world that is womanhood. Women are different from us men. Their needs are different. Their responses to life are different. They hurt in different ways and for different reasons than we do.

Mothers need to be appreciated. They need to know that their often invisible work is deeply and regularly appreciated. Our culture devalues motherhood and domestic work. Women are being encouraged to trade success in the home for success in the workplace. Moms are grossly underappreciated. Men, change that. Encourage the older women in your life as mothers. Notice and appreciate their valuable work. Stand up for them.

Men, encourage and value the older women in your life. Add joy to their work by showing them how much you appreciate them.

Young ladies looking for a husband, want to know how a man will treat you when you're married? Don't go by how he treats you when you first meet! Look at how he treats his mom and sisters (if he has them). That would give you a much clearer picture of how you'll be treated after the wedding. Is he harsh with his mom? Does he criticize her

instead of appreciate her? Guess how he will treat you??? Does he tell his mom he appreciates the things she does? Does he look for ways to help her and make her load lighter? Pretty good chance he'll treat you the same way.

Unmarried men, practice being a good husband by appreciating the women in your life right now. Be a good son and a good brother, and you'll have a better chance of being a good husband.

²older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

Our passage ends with the instruction to encourage younger women as sisters, in all purity.

This isn't just good instruction for Timothy, who was a pastor. This is good instruction for all Christian men. In fact, it's not just instruction, it's a command. Jesus warned against lusting after women, and called it adultery in the heart. Now, I doubt there's a man alive who has gone through puberty that has kept this command perfectly, but for most men there is not an area where we occasionally do not have to contend with a lustful thought or two. As men, we are in an ongoing and constant battle of the mind to think pure thoughts. And so Paul puts a special emphasis on Timothy's relationships with women (particularly younger ones) and reminds him to interact with them in all purity.

What this meant for Timothy is not elaborated on, but let me give us a couple of practical thoughts for us today.

Men, strive to live "in all purity" toward the women in your life.

1. Avoid flirting.

This goes for unmarried guys and married guys alike. If you have a sister, you don't flirt with her (or at least you shouldn't).

2. Guard your thought-life against fantasies.

3. Treat every woman like your sister.

How do you want the women in your life to be treated? Treat all other women like that.

This is a tall order, and perhaps an impossible task. But every Christian man is called into this fight. You must engage in this fight by grace-fueled activity. You must work and use every tool at your disposal to be pure in your thoughts and actions toward women. Use Scripture, worship, male accountability, and everything you have available to you, but do it in the Spirit's power and by the grace that God gives, not merely in your own human strength.