

Family Confrontations

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[0 : 00] If you would stand with me as we read God's Word together again, 1 Timothy 5, verses 1-2.

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

May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? The Bible uses a lot of different analogies to describe the church.

Our Lord referred to the church in John 15, 15 as a vine, emphasizing the common connections believers have in God that enables them to produce fruit.

Revelations 5, 10 refers to the church as a kingdom, accentuating believers' submission to Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords as citizens of His kingdom.

[1 : 09] Peter calls the church a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a holy nation in 1 Peter 2, verses 5 and 9, reiterating who we are in Christ and the direct access that we have to God the Father through Jesus His Son.

In chapter 5, verses 2 through 3 of 2 Peter, Peter calls the church a flock, stressing the church's common need to be led and fed by Jesus, the great shepherd.

The apostle Paul compared the church to a body in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 with Jesus as the head, highlighting the common life and dependency that we have in Jesus and how we are to work together, functioning in our unique roles, utilizing our spiritual gifts to promote unity in achieving our purpose and our mission to make disciples.

So the Bible describes the church as a vine, a kingdom, a nation, a priesthood, a flock, and a body. There is one other analogy that is used to describe the church, and it's the one that best fits the context of our passage this morning, which is a family.

In 1 Timothy 3, verse 14 through 15, if you remember, Paul there gives Timothy his purpose for writing this letter to him, and he compares there the church to God's household, God's family.

[2 : 38] And he says, I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you 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.

When a church is not founded and supported by the truth of God's word, it will not uphold the truth of God's word, and dysfunction results.

When God's word is ignored, sin is tolerated. And Timothy's task was to reorder God's household and to reform its members by encouraging them to behave in obedience to God's instruction for his household, for his church, for the family of God.

And this meant confronting sin. Primarily, the sin that Timothy was to confront first was that of false teachers and their false teachings.

Some of them may have been elders in the church, and they were teaching false doctrines, and as a result of that, they were creating a lot of disorder, they were creating a lot of dysfunction in the church. Look back at what Paul says to Timothy in chapter 1, verses 3 through 4.

[3 : 57] As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine in order to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculation rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

So again, Timothy was to confront these men and repair the wreckage they inflicted upon the church by shipwrecking their faith. We've already covered what some of that damage produced. Some men, again, were teaching strange things, which in reality were the teachings of demons, Paul says in chapter 4, verses 1 through 3. This produced other sinful behaviors in the church that

will be addressed as we continue to progress through this book.

But what is important for us to understand now is not only Timothy's task to confront sin as Paul urged him to, but to understand what was to motivate Timothy, what was to be the motivating factor as he confronted sin in the church, which he tells him in chapter 1, verse 5.

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

[5 : 20] Love for the Lord, love for the truth, and love for others in the church whom Timothy was to relate to as members of his family.

And so the main idea for this morning's sermon is that the church is a family where members support each other by confronting one another's sins.

Sin in the church needed to be dealt with, again, because it disrupts the health and intimacy of the family. When sin is not confronted, it spreads.

It spreads like a disease. For example, the Corinthian church not only tolerated sin, it also boasted about how it tolerated sin in its members.

Listen to the stern warning that Paul gives to them about their refusal to confront sin in God's household in 1 Corinthians 5, 6 through 13. He says to them,

[7 : 27] In Matthew chapter 18, verses 15 through 18, Jesus gave clear commands expressing his expectation that we confront members in the church when they sin.

He says there, At this point, what is important for us to understand as Christians is that unconforted sin in the family of God has devastating consequences.

Each member of the church is commanded by Jesus to confront others when they sin against them. Church leaders, church leaders, like Timothy, are responsible to preserve the church's purity, and they are to do that, like Timothy, by confronting sin in the church to encourage and to promote its unity.

This isn't optional. It's commanded. It's commanded. It's commanded. It's necessary. And it's necessary. It's also important for us to understand the importance of having the right attitude, again, when we confront sin in the family of God.

And so there's two Greek verbs here in verse 1 that must govern our understanding, serve as sort of barriers that keep us in line with how we are to understand the need to confront and how to confront.

[9 : 32] The first Greek verb is epiblepo, which is translated as rebuke or sharp rebuke. This isn't just a rebuke. This is a rebuke with bite.

This is a rebuke with teeth. It's a rebuke that goes beyond correcting misbehavior and seeks to verbally attack the person misbehaving, to put them down.

It's the kind of rebuke I've unfortunately seen, and maybe you've unfortunately seen, a lot of parents give their children at the store, like at Walmart, when they're misbehaving. Maybe the child is reaching outside of the card and, you know, being a kid and grabbing and touching things they're not supposed to, and the parent not only tells them not to do that, but they curse at them or they call them names.

They rebuke them in ways that are sinful. Paul tells Timothy in verse 1 not to do that, not to sin when confronting the sins of church members by being verbally abusive to them.

Instead, he is to encourage them, which is the other Greek verb that must guide our understanding of these verses, which is perikaleo. And it can also be translated as strengthen.

[10 : 48] It portrays the image of someone coming alongside another who is weak, who has fallen, and who not only picks them up, but puts their arm around them to keep them up.

And Paul talks about that kind of encouragement in Galatians chapter 6, verses 1 through 2. He says, My coach in college was good at rebuking us with encouragement.

He'd correct our mistakes. He'd correct our errors. And then he would say to us, I know you're better than that. And then you would think, Yeah, I am better than that.

And so I know what I need to do in order to fulfill my potential. He used positive language to help us do better. The goal of confrontation is restoration, not destruction.

So as a believer, this message should matter to you because Jesus, again, commands you to confront sin in his household, but to do it in a way that builds up the family instead of tearing it apart.

[12 : 17] If you're here this morning and you are not a Christian, maybe you've been to a church before. This isn't your first time visiting a church, and you've maybe in your past been confronted by

someone who said they were a Christian in the ways that Paul tells Timothy not to.

They rebuked you harshly. We're glad you're here. But understand that salvation begins with a confrontation.

You, like all of us, have sinned against God. God is holy. And God will not tolerate the sins that we tolerate. But with that confrontation comes the encouragement, comes the good news.

That God is love. And in love, he sent his son Jesus to die on the cross to take your punishment that by faith in him, you will have eternal life.

You will be saved. You will become a part of his family. And so we're glad you're here. You're going to hear the gospel today. And I hope that today is a day of salvation for you, that you will turn from your sins, that you will turn to Jesus, and that you will receive his grace, and that we can call you brother, that we can call you sister.

[13:33] Because the church is a family. It's a family where members support each other, and they do that by confronting one another's sins. In these verses, Paul tells us how we are to confront each other's sins in the church.

And so firstly, he says that we are to confront older men as fathers. Again, verse 1, he says, Paul commands Timothy to confront older men in the church with the same respect that he would show to his own father.

And in the Bible, God clearly communicates the command that older men are to be treated with respect. In one of those places, Leviticus 19.32, he says, You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of the old man, and you shall fear your God, I am the Lord.

Proverbs 30.17 warns in graphic terms of the consequences of not showing that kind of honor and respect to older men. There, God's word says, So don't disrespect and dishonor your mom and your dad, older men and women.

In the Ten Commandments, God calls children to honor their parents. And that applies at all times and all stages of life.

[15:11] Some of us have been blessed with godly fathers. And so, like me, it's easier for us in that case to comprehend Paul's command here.

But for some of you, that hasn't been the case. Maybe your father wasn't a godly man, and maybe he lived in dishonorable ways.

The wounds inflicted by an unloving, uncaring, or absent father are deep and they're painful.

And so, as a result of that, you may see older men in the church and tempted to perceive them as unloving, uncaring, absent father figures.

But God's command to honor older men and fathers are unconditional. Now, you may need boundaries, you may need to talk to someone, but you must avoid, we must all avoid, returning evil for evil.

[16:21] I've been reading through 2 Samuel, which includes the story of Absalom's rebellion against his father, David. Now, you know, if you read Scripture, if you read the life of David, David wasn't the best father.

And though the Bible doesn't explicitly say why Absalom rebelled against him, we can put the pieces together and figure out why he did. And basically, it came down to the fact that Absalom didn't respect David.

David didn't confront the horrendous sin, you can go back and read it, that caused Absalom to seek the murder of his own brother.

He took justice into his own hands in ways that just added to the sin, added to the dysfunction of the family. And when Absalom was punished for that, he grew to resent David even more, even when David eventually allowed him to come back home.

The rift in the family led to a rift in the nation with tragic consequences. Absalom's anger towards David led him to dishonor him, revolt against him, which produced a lot of devastation.

[17:44] King Nebuchadnezzar was not Daniel's father, but Daniel's rebuke of him serves as a good model of how to approach sinning older men in the church.

Daniel 4.27 records his words to King Nebuchadnezzar, Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you. Break off your sins by practicing righteousness in your iniquities, by showing mercy to the oppressed.

And there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity. And so we see Daniel is respectful as he warns the king to stop sinning. And with that, he provides encouragement by telling him the

positive results that could happen if he forsakes his sins.

This is a pattern that we should follow when confronting older men in the church, speaking the truth to them, and doing so in a way that also communicates honor and respect.

Now, men, we know that respect is especially a big deal to us. I once read in a book that, it was a book about marriage, that women want to feel loved, men want to feel respected.

[19 : 01] If you don't show an older man respect when you confront them, they're not going to listen to you, which defeats the purpose of confronting sin because you want them to listen to you.

And so we confront older men in the church as fathers. Second, we are to confront younger men as brothers. The rest of verse 1, again, continuing the thought, Paul says to Timothy, confront younger men as brothers.

The key word in confronting younger men is to treat them as brothers. I was not the best man at my best man's wedding, though we were best friends because he had two brothers.

And though I was closer to him than his older brother, who was his best man, and I didn't question that, but he told me, you know, Mike, you're my best friend, but he's my brother.

And he has to be my best man because he's my brother. Brothers are interesting because sometimes they're really rotten to each other.

[20 : 18] Sometimes they're just awful to each other. But despite that, there's a bond between brothers that's just hard to break. In Leviticus 19, 17, God forbids his people from hating their brothers.

And if anyone in the Bible had reason to hate his brothers, it was Joseph in Genesis. Joseph's brothers despised him.

They contemplated killing him, and eventually they settled on just selling him into slavery where he would go off to Egypt. And after doing that, they went back to their father and said, yeah, he was mauled to death by animals.

Joseph eventually rises to a high position of great power in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. And later, when Joseph's brothers come back to Egypt to purchase food during a terribly prolonged drought, Joseph recognized them, even though they didn't recognize him.

And eventually he revealed himself to them. But instead of using his position to seek revenge on his brothers who despised him, he chose instead to forgive them and to bless them.

[21 : 39] I want to read a couple of passages from that story. First in Genesis 45, 4 through 5. So Joseph said to his brothers, come near to me, please. And they came near and he said, I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me here before you to preserve life. And then Genesis 50, 15 through 21.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, so Joseph forgives them, brings the family in, takes care of them. And in the minds of his brothers, they're still thinking, well, he's just waiting for our dad to die.

And then he's going to get us for what we did. So in verse 15, when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, it may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him. So they sent a message to Joseph saying, your father gave this command before he died.

Say to Joseph, please forgive the transgressions of your brothers and their sin because they did evil to you. And now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

[22 : 48] This wasn't his plan. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, behold, we are your servants. But Joseph said to them, do not fear for am I in the place of God?

As for you, you meant this evil against me, but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people would be kept alive as they are today. So do not fear. I will provide for you and your little ones.

Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. No one in this church, to my knowledge, has sinned in the ways that Joseph's brothers sinned against them or have been on the receiving end of that.

Yet Joseph forgave them. And he extended grace to them. A picture of the grace of God and sending Jesus his son to preserve our lives, adopting us as his children into his family to lavish us with a kindness that we do not deserve.

Since Jesus has done this kindness for you, how can you withhold the same kindness to others in the church?

[24 : 07] The New Testament commands believers to love each other as brothers. In 1 John 2, 9 through 11, and then 3, 11 through 15, the apostle tells us, whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

And then chapter 3, verses 11 through 15, For this is the message that we have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.

And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers.

Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

[25 : 07] For older people in our church, to love younger men like brothers is to demonstrate that you view them, that you regard them not as someone beneath you, but as equals.

Our younger men need our older men to disciple them, to encourage them, to strengthen them, as a loving older brother would for his younger brother.

But such love does not mean that we don't confront their sin. It's the other way around. Because we love them, we confront them.

Paul told the Christians in Thessalonica in 2 Thessalonians 3, 6, and then verses 14 through 15. Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you have received from us.

Verse 14. If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person and have nothing to do with him that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

[26 : 26] Brotherly confrontation must be done with humility and love. Not creating fake email accounts and fake social media accounts and using those anonymous things to attack brothers within the church whom you suspect of sinning in ways that need confronting.

Know you're to go to that person in love, seeking restoration. Even if they don't receive that confrontation the way that they should and they need further disciplining as a result of that, that doesn't mean that we ever get to a point where we treat a brother as an enemy.

We continue to pray for them. We continue to pray for the restoration to the Lord and to the church. Third, we are to confront older women as mothers.

Again, beginning in verse 2, Paul says older women as mothers. Like fathers, the Bible also commands that we show honor and respect to mothers, to older women.

Proverbs 1.8 says, Hear, my son, your father's instruction and forsake not your mother's teaching. Proverbs 23.22 says, Listen to your father who gave you life and do not despise your mother when she is old.

[27 : 51] Most of the instruction from Scripture about confronting older men with honor and respect applies to mothers and older women as well. So I'm not going to rehash all of that, but we do have an example of how to confront older women as mothers in Philippians 4.2-3.

Paul, writing to the Christians in Philippi, says, I entreat Iodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.

Yes, I also ask you, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are written in the book of life.

Now, what's interesting to note here is that Paul doesn't mention in any way what these two ladies were disagreeing about. Whatever their issue was, he understood that the greater issue that needed to be confronted was the damage being done to the church because these two ladies were not able or maybe unwilling to resolve whatever their lesser issue was.

these two ladies were causing more harm to the church. Maybe their conflict was causing people in the church to take sides.

[29 : 17] We don't know. But what we do know is that Paul wanted the church to get involved. He doesn't tell them, hey, everybody else, mind your own business.

He says, you guys get involved. Resolve this issue. Notice also that Paul talks about these ladies without putting them down, without rebuking them in any way.

He talks about both of them labored with him in the cause for Christ. He's reminding them of that, how they worked with him. And he includes their names in the book of life.

And so while rebuking them, he communicated his love for them. And this is how we confront older women as mothers in the church, showing our love for them.

And then fourth, confront younger women as sisters. The rest of verse two, Paul says, younger women as sisters, and the last part is important, in all purity.

[30 : 20] While all Christians are commanded to confront each other in these ways, like a family, notice that Paul includes this specific instruction for Timothy as he is to confront younger women in the church, as an elder of the church, that he's to do so in all purity.

Timothy was to confront younger women as his sisters and take extra efforts to avoid putting them and himself in a compromising position.

Timothy needed to be aware of the temptations that could come with meeting a younger woman alone. Timothy needed to be concerned with the perception that others might have if they saw him meeting with a younger woman alone.

His confrontation needed to be done in all purity so that temptation to sin or for others to gossip would be avoided. This means avoiding meeting with younger women where he would be alone with them.

A pastor friend of mine told me about a pastor friend of his who was counseling a younger single woman in the church. And this man was meeting with this woman out in public at coffee shops.

[31 : 42] And when my friend questioned this pastor about meeting alone with this woman the pastor's response to him was well, we're not alone. We're surrounded by people and my wife knows that I'm meeting with her.

It's all innocent. I just want to help her. And then my friend said to him okay but is that wise? He stopped meeting with her because it wasn't wise.

Elders, leaders, men take someone with you when confronting a sister in the church. Take another elder.

Take your spouse. Don't put yourself in a position to compromise a younger woman's purity. Be wise. And so how do we adjust to what we've just heard?

I think it's simply this. Confront sin in the spiritual family of God. We need to be doing this. We shouldn't be avoiding this. And we need to be doing this in the right ways.

[32 : 54] Treating one another with love, with respect, with honor. Not wanting to just let somebody have it. but wanting to encourage them to be better.

To forsake this sin, to resolve this issue so that our church is healthier, that our church is better.

And our unity and our purpose to make much of the name of Jesus Christ.

I do want to give you some encouragement on how to do that. Just some practical things because you might be thinking okay, alright, Pastor Mike, I see that I'm supposed to do that. I understand the motivation behind it, how I'm to address them, but what's the first step?

And I would say the first step is always to begin with prayer. It's always to pray. Pray to the Lord, seek Him out, His help, His encouragement to do what needs to be done.

then ask for a time to meet with that person because once you've committed to that time, you've committed to having that conversation. Now, one thing I do want to write as a disclaimer here, just because I asked to meet with you or get coffee with you, it doesn't automatically mean that I'm going to confront you about something.

[34 : 15] So don't hesitate to have those meetings with me, but begin in prayer and commit to a time. Hey, could we get together at this time, at this place?

Just have something that I want to talk to you about. And then when you do that, start with a loving word. Say to them, because they are, hey, brother. Hey, sister.

And when you do that, it puts you in the mind frame and then that we're family members talking to one another. And they're more willing to hear you out.

And then third, I think another great way to have these conversations is to ask questions. Begin by asking questions. Instead of, on this date, at this time, you did this and that made me really mad. And I'm trying not to hate you or anything like that. We see an example of this when Paul confronts Peter. He asked him a question. How are you, who is a Jew, interacting with Gentiles, acting like you don't care about these people whenever these Jews come?

[35 : 26] He's asking him questions. Ask questions. Sometimes it might just be, hey, what's going on? Or explain to me why this, that, and the other.

And hear them out and be willing to hear them out because the goal is restoration, not destruction. I've been on both sides of these things and I'll tell you that at the end result, most of the time, most of the time, I'm not going to put a percentage on it, but 90-something percentage of the time, I guess I just did put a percentage on it, the relationship is restored and the relationship is better afterwards.

It's better afterwards. It's stronger because you know that that person who's had this conversation with you, they love you. They care about the things that you care about.

They want the things that you want. And so don't hesitate to have these conversations because God commands it and doing this will make our church better.

It's interesting to note, too, that the one who writes this letter, who's inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this, is Paul. Paul, Paul, who hated Christians and who as a Jew would have despised Gentiles, is writing to Christians, many of them who are Gentiles.

[36 : 55] And he's writing to them because he loves them, because he cares about them, because he wants their church to be healthy. Which is interesting because there was a time in his life where he wanted the exact opposite.

He wanted the church to no longer exist. That's what he made it, his goal was to persecute Christians. And on his way to doing that, he was confronted by the risen Jesus Christ, who asked him a question, didn't he?

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And here's Jesus knowing this man and his sins and all the things that he was doing and striving to do to put an end to his church, his family, whom he loved.

who calls him and who saves him, gives him new direction in life, making him the apostle to the Gentiles, completely transforming him.

Friend, that is what Christ does. That's what he can do for you. If you're not saved, he's confronting you in your sins.

[38 : 04] and he's warning you that that path leads to destruction. That path leads to eternal separation from him.

And he calls you, come to me, forsake your sins, follow me, I will give you new life.

I will give you abundant life. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. You'll have eternal life. He's calling you to be a part of his family by putting your faith in him, who he is, and what he's done.

And friend, I hope that you turn to him today if you haven't already and that you would become a part of the family of God.

Let's pray. Lord, our text in your word this morning dealt with a topic that is one that honestly, Lord, we would rather avoid because it's easier to avoid.

[39 : 19] It's easier, Lord, to not put ourselves in situations where we feel like we have to have a difficult conversation and I think, Father, our flesh and the enemy tempts us to think that if we have these conversations, if we take part in these confrontations, that somehow we're doing something that is going to result in even worse things and we forget that these are things that you've commanded us to do and that in doing them, Lord, your church is made better.

It's healthier. It's pure. It's more focused on its purpose and its mission which is to make disciples and to disciple those who have been saved and so, Father, help us to not allow those excuses to cloud our understanding of what you clearly command us to do in your word because, Father, for each of us when you've saved us you confronted us with our sin.

you warned us about the consequences of our sin and you showed us the good news. You revealed to us the good news that there's hope if we turn to you and then following you that, Lord, we are saved from the eternity of hell and separation from you.

And so, Father, help us to follow in your example to not be afraid to confront sin but also, Lord, to follow your example and doing it the right way. To truly see each other not as just people that we sit with in church or people that we, hey, they go to my church but to see each other as more than that. To see each other in the ways that you command us to and the reality of who we are in you. We are a family. To see each other as brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers and, Lord, to love one another in the ways that you have made possible for us to love one another.

[41 : 18] And so, Lord, we pray that we would take this commandment of yours seriously. Lord, help us to do it in the right way and we pray that the results would please you and help us to be the kind of church, Lord, that has its priorities in order, its mission in order, and who doesn't get sidetracked by less important things.

But, Father, that we would just strive to give in service to you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.