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"If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Timothy 5:8).

The Place for the Aged

Lesson Subject: The aged hold a place of value in the Christian home.

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Topic: Home; Family.

I wish I had known my grandparents. All four of them passed away before I was old enough to remember them. I can see the contribution that grandparents make to the lives of their grandchildren today. I know the delight I take in my grandchildren and see opportunities to help them know and love the Lord Jesus. So I feel a little deprived because I did not know my grandparents and did not receive the contribution they could have made to my life.

There is a place for the aged in the home, a valued and respected place that no one else can fill. They can give godly counsel based on their experience. They can be an example of righteous living. They can provide an opportunity for the younger to minister unselfishly to them.

One specialist in social etiquette laments that there is a loss of many social graces among our children today. One thing lost is a respect for the aged and a willingness to help them. That loss will have far-reaching results in our youth-oriented society. This study is designed to help you see God's attitude toward the elderly and to learn His directions for your dealings with them. The central truth is, "The aged hold a place of value in the Christian home." Let God teach you as you examine 1 Timothy 5:1-8 and Titus 2:1-5.

I. A PLACE OF RESPECT (I Timothy 5:1-4)

A. Show courtesy to the aged. Sometimes the elderly can be

exasperating. They may talk too much, move too slowly, resist change, or have old-fashioned ideas. Even so, God requires courtesy toward them. *"Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and . . . the elder women as mothers"* (I Timothy 5:1, 2). Correction must be done in kindness and love, showing full courtesy to them.

Courtesy to the aged is shown in action. God said, *"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD"* (Leviticus 19:32). It is an act of courtesy for the younger to yield to the elderly.

Courtesy to the aged is shown in attitude. God commands, *"Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old"* (Proverbs 23:22). What wise counsel! To do otherwise is sin, for God commands it.

B. Show honor to the aged. Each person is to respect any person who is older than he. Special honor is to be given to one's parents (Exodus 20:12). Elderly widows are to receive special recognition and respect (I Timothy 5:3). The person who does not respect his parents will be under the curse of God: *"Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother"* (Deuteronomy 27:16). He will surely account to God, for that is sin.

C. Make provision for the aged. The early church had a problem with that; so, God had Paul to write, *"If any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for this is good and acceptable before God"* (I Timothy 5:4). To *"requite"* means to make a return payment for value received. It teaches the obligation of children to return the care of those who brought them up by repaying their debt to them. For years the parents provided and cared for the children; now the children can provide and care for the aged parents. That is the way for them to *"shew piety"* (manifest their godliness) in their own household.

Is there an aged member of your family over whom you should be exercising this ministry of love? If so, do it for their sake and for Jesus' sake. God requires it.

II. A PLACE OF NEED (I Timothy 5:4~8)

A. The aged have a spiritual ministry in the home (1 Timothy 5:5-7). Many of them feel that they are useless and a burden on their families. They need to know that they are loved and respected for the contribution they make to the family.

How the homes of our land need prayers today! The aged person can

continue *"in supplications and prayers night and day"* (I Timothy 5:5). Like Anna, who *"departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day"* (Luke 2:37), they can fortify the home with a ministry of prayer. How fortunate is the home with a praying grandfather or grandmother. Thank God for them.

B. The aged have a practical ministry in the home. They can show us discipline. Much of our society is geared to pleasure and the immediate satisfaction of every need. The elderly can be an example of self-discipline. That may be one of the most important lessons they can teach.

C. The aged need material provisions. It is the responsibility of the family, not of the state, to provide for the elderly. *"If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel"* (I Timothy 5:8). There is the divinely stated obligation which rests upon each of us.

The relatives of the aged person bear the responsibility for his/her care. If there are no relatives, a person of compassion must do the job, as Jesus commended His mother to the care of John (John 19:26, 27). Jesus condemned severely those who used excuses, even religious ones, to keep from having to support their parents (Mark 7:9-13). How much better it is to obey God and show love to the aged by caring for them.

III. A PLACE OF SERVICE (Titus 2:1-5)

A. Aged men are to serve by setting a wholesome example. They can do that by being *"sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience"* (Titus 2:2). Think about those requirements of God upon the elderly.

1. To be *"sober"* means to be temperate, not excessive in their tastes. To live *"soberly"* is God's requirement of all His children (Titus 2:12; I Peter 1:13). The aged can set an example of such self control which will bless the younger.

2. To be *"grave"* means to be dignified, serious, decent. There will be no "dirty old man" in mind, actions, or words when one is grave. But to be grave does not mean that a person is so serious that he never enjoys life. Let the aged man be cheerful and discreet at the same time.

3. To be *"temperate"* means to be self-restrained, orderly, wise. Should older people neglect their personal hygiene, their appearance, and their social graces? No! God commands them to continue to be Christian in appearance and conduct as well as in faith. Even the elderly can continue to

grow in faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (II Peter 1:5-7). That is being "*temperate*."

4. To be "*sound in faith*" means to be established and healthy in one's trust in God. There is no reason for one's trust in God to fail or for his doctrines of the faith to be deserted in old age. Instead, one should grow in faith and be more able to teach younger people sound doctrine.

5. To have "*charity*" means to let the love of God flow through one and out to others. That is how we can "*walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us*" (Ephesians 5:2). That is how one dwells in love and thus dwells in God (I John 4:16). Bitterness does not have to accompany age. Love can grow as the years pass, and old age can be a time of sweetness.

6. To have "*patience*" means to endure, persevere, and be steadfast. Time often passes slowly for the aged and infirmed. Physical limitations often veto their desires. But they can possess their souls in patience (Luke 21:19). They all "*have need of patience*" in order that they "*might receive the promise*" (Hebrews 10:36). That is a challenging, but not an impossible, standard set for older men. God will enable the man of honest heart to live up to that ideal. By so doing, an older man will show the reality of his faith in Jesus.

B. The aged women are to serve by showing exemplary character. Paul admonished "*the aged women likewise*" to "*be in behaviour as becometh holiness*" (Titus 2:3). Here is the life-style that God requires of the elderly women.

1. They are to be "holy." That does not mean sinless, but it does mean reverent. When those women's deportment testifies of holiness of spirit, marked by a worshipful obedience to God, it has a profound influence for good. Blessed is the woman who lives "*in holiness and righteousness before him*" (Luke 1:75).

2. They are to be pure in speech, "*not false accusers*." God have mercy on the woman who is a scandal-monger, a malicious gossip, who delights in seeking out the bad about a person and spreading it abroad. And God have mercy on the persons who have to live with her. Such a spirit is forbidden of God. "*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit*" (Proverbs 15:4). Speak well or speak not at all.

3. They are to be self-controlled, "*not given to much wine*." There might be that danger for one who sits around the house, unable to get out and work day after day. But it is best to keep the body under control, lest when one has ended his course he find himself an unprofitable servant of God (1 Corinthians 9:27). Discipline the body.

4. They are to be influential, "*teachers of good things.*" To teach what is right and virtuous is the highest employment possible for an older Christian woman. What are some things they can teach the younger women?

a. Teach family loyalty. They need to learn "*to love their husbands, to love their children*" (Titus 2:4). In these days of quick divorces and child neglect, every woman should be taught commitment to the family (Proverbs 31:27).

b. Teach personal piety. Titus 2:5 indicate five aspects of this instruction. (1) To be "*discreet*" is to use good judgment, to be sensible. That is important since "*discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee*" (Proverbs 2:11). (2) To be "*chaste*" is to be morally pure in thought and act. To keep oneself to the marriage partner only is not only old fashioned, but it is also biblical and God honoring (I Thessalonians 4:3). (3) To be "*keepers at home*" means to have one's interest and time invested in the family. (4) To be "*good*" is to be kind and helpful — good for something. (5) To be "*obedient to their own husbands*" is to respect the husband's position and adapt to his leadership of the family.

Do you see any principle above which needs teaching today? A woman who lives that life-style pleases God and sets a model for her daughters.

5. They are to defend the honor of God. God's name will be maligned and suffer reproach if Christian women do not live up to their profession (Titus 2:5). What a solemn responsibility they have! Our youth-oriented generation has lost much of our esteem for the wisdom and experience of the elderly. We suffer as a consequence. What a blessing the older people can be to us. Love the elderly person in your family, and show it. Let him contribute to your family life as an important member of the household. Love him for Jesus' sake.

QUESTIONS

1. What contribution can grandparents make to a home?
2. How can a young person show courtesy to an older person?
3. What did Paul mean by saying "*Let them learn first to show piety at home*" (I Timothy 5:4)?
4. What spiritual ministry can the elderly have in the home?
5. How does I Timothy 5:8 relate to this study?
6. What does Titus 2:2 require of the aged men?
7. How can an older woman obey Titus 2:3?
8. What "*good things*" should older women teach younger women?
9. Why will God's name be blasphemed if Christian women do not live

right?

10. In what practical way can you put this study into effect this week?