Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – April 7, 2019

**Nurturing God’s Family**

**Planting, Establishing, and Leading Local Churches**

Practical Principles from The Pastoral Letters

**“Just Family”**

**1 Timothy 5:1-16**

While we sometimes make light of family ties, and abuse the expression, “Make yourself at home,” the truth is that no relationships run deeper than family connections. This passage demonstrates this basic principle on two fronts: first, taking care of one’s own kindred and second, seeing the local church as your spiritual family.

 Much heartache can be avoided by following Paul’s simple advice to Timothy, and we can learn much by thinking through his instructions for widows. Following Jesus in His compassion always is in order.

**What are Paul’s key points?**

✓ Relate to others appropriately by age and gender, just as you would your own family members. vv. 1-3

✓ “Widows Indeed” (those whom the church should help) are those who walk with God but have no supporting family. vv. 4-8

✓ “Widows Enrolled” (those who help the church) should be those who are elderly, have followed Jesus faithfully, and have dedicated themselves to service. vv. 9-13

✓ “Widow Priorities” are first, to marry, second, to be aided by family, third, to be cared for by (or serve) the church. vv 14-16

***What is the Big Idea?***

*A church is established as its leaders treat church members*

*as beloved, respected family members,*

*especially caring for and empowering those without resources.*

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***How do we apply these principles?***

***1. Family or Foe?*** Paul’s instruction to Timothy about treating church members in age and gender-appropriate ways clearly is sage advice. What pitfalls can Timothy avoid by not rebuking an elder, but entreating him as a father (or grandfather)? Why should Timothy treat older women as he would his mother? Why treat younger women as sisters? This does not mean there are never conflicts, but that they are resolved in loving and helpful ways. Who is your family? Mark 3:20, 21, 31-35; Romans 2:28, 29

***2. Family or Church?***  The care of widows is primarily the responsibility of their own families (5:4, 8, 16), and only then, the church’s. What are the reasons Paul gives for this principle? In our culture of social programs and “senior living” centers, how should these principles be applied? If a family is not taking care of an elderly parent or grandparent, should the church intervene? If so, how should that be done? James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-18

***3. Faith and Works*** Paul’s words to Timothy are serious ones. What does he say is at stake (vv. 4, 8) if a family does not care for their widows? Why does he say this? And what is at stake if a widow (one who had been “enrolled” as a servant to the church in those days) abandons her promises? What does it mean to turn aside after Satan? Are there any parallels today of the “enrolled” widows of the first century church?