

How to Show Respect to Everyone

Our study may make some feel uncomfortable. We are going to learn how God wants us to show respect to everyone else who is older than us. We will also learn how God wants us to show respect to anyone who is younger.

As I studied the passage I will be teaching, I discovered important principles in both the Old and New Testaments. Then I began to wonder how other countries showed respect to those who are older and younger. I discovered that in Pakistan, it is extremely important to treat your elders with respect. For example, a younger person must never address an elder by their first name. A person must “use a clear, soft, low tone of voice when communicating with an elder.” One must “try to avoid ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions and use open-ended questions instead.” The younger a person, the greater the respect that must be shown.¹

In Ghana, younger people do not address the elderly by their first name. They must always say, “Mr., Mrs., Sir, or Madam.” Ghanaians are also the most likely to jump up on public transportation and offer their seat to older passengers. In a report titled, “Ten Insights Into Ghanaian Culture: #8 – Respect In Ghana,” it is stated,

Anyone older than you is to be treated with deference--the older they are, the more deference that is necessary: you must be the

first to greet them (and greet them, you must); you must offer your assistance in any way you can; you must run errands for them; you must serve them first...²

In the Philippines, great respect is also shown to anyone who is older than you. For example, if you are speaking to an older person, you will always add the word “opo” to the end of your statement, which is the equivalent of “sir” or “madam.” In Morocco the hands of the elderly are kissed as a sign of respect. Many countries have laws that require respect be shown to the elderly. Great respect for elders seems to be shown around the world, except not so much in the western countries.

DO NOT SHARPLY REBUKE...BUT APPEAL. Respect for the elderly did not begin with those countries. It began with our God, as we will see in our study. Our study is from 1 Timothy

5:1-2. These two verses paint a picture of how to show respect to those who are older and to those who are younger. Verse 1 and 2 say,

Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as

brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity. 1 Timothy 5:1-2 (NASB)

These verses have six parts. Verse 1 gives us two principles, and both verses apply those principles to four groups of people.



1. “Cultural Do’s and Don’ts: Pakistani Elderly.” Cultural Do’s and Don’ts: Pakistani Elderly. (www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/)

2. “Ten Insights Into Ghanaian Culture: #8 – Respect In Ghana. thetravellingsociologist. (www.thetravellingsociologist.com/respect-in-ghana/) 30/05/2017.

The first principle is given in verse 1, “Do not sharply rebuke . . . but appeal.” This principle is then applied to two groups of people: older men, and older women. The Greek word that is translated as “sharply rebuke” is *epiplesso*. It is a compound word made up of *epi* and *plesso*. *Plesso* has the meaning “to strike at” and *epi* then heightens the meaning of the word. But in this context, the word has the sense of a verbal attack. That is, we are never to use harsh words with someone who is older. We are never to display an attitude of superiority toward someone older. We are never to attempt to seize control with our words over them or try to win an argument with someone who is older. Instead, Paul tells Timothy that he is to appeal to those who are older.

The word “appeal” is translated from the Greek word *parakaleo* which means “to comfort, encourage, or urge.” The noun form of this word is “comforter.” It is used of the Holy Spirit. So, Paul gave Timothy this divine principle so that he and we would never assault an older person with words but instead seek to encourage and comfort them.

In this verse Paul primarily applies the principle of respect to situations where an older believer is habitually committing some sin. In this situation, Timothy was not to use verbal assaults, insults, or verbal abuses to motivate them to stop sinning. Sadly, some youth believe that “tell it like it is” is honorable. Some take pride in “speaking their mind.” Some are upset at the evil and so they “go to war” to correct the wrong. But that is unloving and disrespectful. To do otherwise, is to not show love and respect.

I think Dr. McGee summarized the sense of “Do not sharply rebuke . . . but appeal” when he said this,

In other words, he was not to take the position of a know-it-all or of a dictator over these older men. He was to encourage them and have a word privately with them if he thought it was necessary.³

Galatians 6:1-2 echoes this principle,

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Galatians

6:1-2 (NASB)

This passage is talking about how to rescue someone from a sin they are habitually committing. The first step is to be spiritual. That is, the rescuer must be free of any habitual sins. The rescuer must approach the sinning believer in a spirit of gentleness. That is the first principle given to us in 1 Timothy 5:1. In the process we must be careful to not commit sin ourselves. That would include the sin of not showing respect.

But what are we to do if the believer does not respond to our gentle approach of encouragement to be holy? If the man is an elder of the church, then 1 Timothy 5:19-21 applies. It says,

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. 1 Timothy 5:19-21 (NASB)

This describes church discipline of an elder. Matthew 18:15-18 is the passage that we normally think of when we discuss church discipline. It requires the rescuing believer to go to the sinning believer one-on-one. If that effort to rescue is not successful, then he or she is to ask another person to help in the rescue. Finally, if that fails, then the elders of the church must become involved. From the beginning to the end, great respect is to be given. So in 1 Timothy 5:1-2, Paul gives us a principle that applies to two groups of older people.

SHOW RESPECT TO OLDER MEN. The first group of older people are older men. The Greek word for “older men” is *presbuteros*. This word means “elders.” It can refer to the elders of the church. But since verses 1 and 2 include younger men, older women, and younger women, it is clear that this time the Greek word just refers to older men.

In the Old Testament, God has given us a number of important verses about how younger people are to treat their parents. The first passage in the Old Testament is Exodus 21:17. It is about a disrespectful child. Three other passages about a disrespectful and verbally abusive child are Leviticus

3. J. Vernon McGee. 1 Timothy. Thru the Bible. Thomas Nelson. 1983. p. 451.

20:9; Deuteronomy 21:18-21 and Proverbs 20:20. Here is Deuteronomy 21:18-21,

If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. They shall say to the elders of his city, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and drunkard." Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear. Deuteronomy 21:18-21 (NASB)

God has established the principle to motivate the youth to respect their parent. That is a warning or a negative instruction in the law about showing respect to the parents.

God has also tried to motivate us to honor our parents with a promise or a positive instruction. The promise is the fifth commandment in the Ten Commandments. It says,

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. Exodus 20:12 (NASB)

The promise is repeated in Deuteronomy 5:16 and in the New Testament in Ephesians 6:2-3. Here is Ephesians 6:2-3,

HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. Ephesians 6:2-3 (NASB)

This time the Holy Spirit adds another reason why we should show respect or honor to our parents. It says, "so that it may be well with you."

GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD OLDER PEOPLE. So why did God give us a warning and a promise? As you listen to these verses ask yourself, what is God's attitude toward older people?

Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep My sabbaths; I am the LORD your God. Leviticus

19:3 (NASB)

You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD. Leviticus 19:32 (NASB)

A gray head is a crown of glory. Proverbs 16:31 (NASB)

What is God's view of older people? He wants us to honor them. That means how we treat older people is a moral issue. It is sin to be disrespectful.

EXAMPLES OF DISRESPECT TO OLDER PEOPLE. Unfortunately, we often think that showing respect to older people is nothing more than common courtesy. It is something that we should do because they are wiser and older. They are having more physical problems. Now that is true, but we have discovered that showing respect or honor is much more than common courtesy. It is a sin to be disrespectful.

Micah 7:1-6 gives us an example of disrespect. It reveals that disrespect is a symptom of the moral decline of a nation. As I read this, notice what the prophet Micah says,

Woe is me! For I am
Like the fruit pickers, like the grape gatherers.
There is not a cluster of grapes to eat,
Or a first-ripe fig which I crave.
The godly person has perished from the land,
And there is no upright person among men.
All of them lie in wait for bloodshed;
Each of them hunts the other with a net.
Concerning evil, both hands do it well.
The prince asks, also the judge, for a bribe,
And a great man speaks the desire of his soul;
So they weave it together.
The best of them is like a briar,
The most upright like a thorn hedge.
The day when you post your watchmen,
Your punishment will come.
Then their confusion will occur.
Do not trust in a neighbor;

Do not have confidence in a friend.
From her who lies in your bosom
Guard your lips.
For son treats father contemptuously,
Daughter rises up against her mother,
Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
A man's enemies are the men of his own household.
Micah 7:1-6 (NASB)

Micah tells us the godly people have died in the nation of Israel in verse 2. He says in verse 3, that the people did evil with two hands, and not with just one hand. In verse 4, he says the best of the people are like a briar bush. A briar is a prickly bush, and not just a single thorn. In verse 5, he said you cannot trust your neighbor. He has been listing the sinful conditions of the nation and the sins of his nation. Then in verse 6 he reveals another sin. They did not respect those who were older. This reveals that a lack of disrespect is a sin.

An example of disrespect to parents is revealed in Genesis 19:30-38. In that passage, Lot's daughters showed disrespect to their father in two ways. First, they made him drunk, and then they had sex with him when he did not understand what was happening.

The point is that disrespect is a sin. It is contrary to God's will. God wants us to respect those who are older than we are.

EXAMPLE OF RESPECT TO OLDER PEOPLE. The book of Job gives a great example of respect for those who are older. The book tells us that Job had three counselors. Job 32:6 says that one of them named Elihu was younger than Job. Notice how he showed respect to Job.

Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were years older than he. Job 32:4 (NASB)

How did Elihu show respect? He waited for Job to speak before he spoke. The message is that it has always been a sign of respect for youth to not interrupt older people. Those who interrupt their elders are only thinking about themselves.

So the first principle is that we are to respect older men. If they are in sin, we are to appeal to them or to be respectful.

TREAT YOUNGER MEN AS EQUALS. 1 Timothy 5:1 also

gives us a second principle. We are to treat younger men as brothers, as equals. It is applied to a second group. This is true even if we catch them in some sin. Romans 12:10 says,

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor. Romans 12:10 (NASB)

Hebrews 13:1 says,

Let love of the brethren continue. Hebrews 13:1 (NASB)

The verse is better translated as "Let brotherly love continue." Both verses describe a type of love. It is love that you would show to a brother. These verses assume that you love your brothers. They command us to love others as we do our own brothers. We are to show respect to our brothers in love. Since these are commands, they reveal that it is sin to not show respect to older men by appealing to them, even when we are dealing with sin. It is also a sin to not treat both our own brothers and Christian brothers as equals.

So, the first principle is that we are to treat older people with respect. When it involves rescuing them from sin, we are to appeal to them. The second principle is that we are show respect to younger men by treating them as equals.

SHOW RESPECT TO OLDER WOMEN. 1 Timothy 5:2 then applies the first principle to older women. Proverbs 19:26 says,

He who assaults his father and drives his mother away
Is a shameful and disgraceful son.
Proverbs 19:26 (NASB)

There is a kind of man who curses his father
And does not bless his mother.
Proverbs 30:11 (NASB)

Proverbs 30:17 warns,

The eye that mocks a father
And scorns a mother,
The ravens of the valley will pick it out,

And the young eagles will eat it.

Proverbs 30:17 (NASB)

It is obvious from these verses that it is a sin to not respect our own mothers too! Recently, I saw this title on a social media page, “Why is there such a lack of respect for senior citizens in America?” Someone replied that America worships youth and not age. Someone else said they do not deserve respect and listed a series of sins that seniors commit. Another person said, “Posh, I don’t know. To me it is not an age issue. Disrespectful people disrespect!” That was probably the wisest answer on the page, but it still misses the mark. Disrespect is sin.

TREAT YOUNGER WOMEN AS EQUALS. The last part of 1 Timothy 5:2 is about younger women. The second principle applies to them. We are to treat younger women as sisters. We are to lovingly treat them as equals. But notice that Paul gives a warning. He says that we are to do it with “purity.” The word simply means “without any moral defect,” or “sinlessness.”

This means that in all of our interactions with younger women, we are to treat them as equals and we men are to guard ourselves against any sexual attractions. The same would be true of women toward younger men.

CONCLUSION. We have learned two principles in dealing with people, especially in the family of God. We are to treat older men and women with great respect. We are to appeal to them when rescuing them from sin. We are to treat younger men and women as equals. The goal is to always show them love. As we do this, we please our God and show love to everyone around us.