

Life in God's Family

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Reggie Sanchez, Gospel Community Church, 10/01/2017

Text: 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.

I. Introduction

1. Family Thoughts

Every single person who has ever been born, was born into a family. Family is the first community that we experience when we are born. It is in family that we are supposed to learn what leadership is, what it means to follow, what it means to interact with others, what it means to love, what it means to handle conflict, what it means to apologize and repent, what it means to forgive, and what it means to belong.

Everyone has very strong feelings about their families. When some people think of their families they are filled with joy, gratitude, and love. Other people, when they think about their families they are filled with grief, disappointment, discouragement, pain, heartache, sorrow, anger, and bitterness. Still when others think about their family they feel both wonderful emotions of love and joy, as well as strong feelings of disappointment and disaffection simultaneously. Whether your family is amazing in your eyes, or you have never met them, or your family experience is somewhere in between, you have strong feelings about your family.

Family often times gives us our most powerful and strongest memories. There are wonderful memories of birthdays, holidays, vacations, daily life, laughing, playing, helping, serving, and living together that make up many of our most precious and cherished moments. In addition to this, family also gives us memories of some of the most traumatic and awful moments in our lives as well. Perhaps we feel an overwhelming ache and sorrow in our hearts and it becomes hard to breathe as we contemplate the loss of a loved one. Or maybe we are angry and upset and depressed when we think about the awful abuse that took place in our families and we can't bear to think about our families because there are so many horrible things that come flooding back into our minds. Family, and our experience of family, for better or worse, is extremely powerful.

No matter what your family experience is, perhaps it is in family that testifies most clearly and powerfully to our need to be saved. God's commandment to children is that they honor and obey their parents (Eph. 6:1-4), yet every single one of us have dishonored and disobeyed our parents at some time during our lives. God's command is that parents bring their children up in the fear and instruction of the Lord, yet unfortunately we have all sinned and made mistakes as parents in raising our children. Whether it is neglecting their spiritual or physical needs, or whether we abandoned our children, abused our children, or ignored our children, every parent has failed in some manner and sinned in their parenting. We have sinned in our marriages as well, and we could spend much time contemplating the different ways this has occurred.

If in any way you have ever sinned, even one time in your family relationships, then you desperately need Christ. If you are not perfect and sinless, and nobody is, then you need the salvation that Jesus offers all people. Christ died for the sins that not only you have committed in your family relationships, but in every other area of your life as well. If you will believe that his death on the cross is the sufficient payment for your sins, and if you will surrender your life to him and pledge your allegiance to follow him all of your days, you will be saved. Not only will you be saved from your sins, you

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will also be reconciled to God, you will become his child, and for the purposes of our focus tonight, you will become part of his family.

2. God's family

When we become believers in Jesus we become the children of God. 1 Jn. 3:1-2, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are...Beloved, we are God's children now..." Romans 8:14-16 tells us that all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, and that when we became believers we received God's Spirit within us, which is a spirit of Sonship, and we are adopted into his family and God is now our Father. This is an amazing reality wherein we are sealed to God himself forever. He will never leave us, he will never stop doing good to us, he will discipline us for our good, he will provide for our needs, he will shepherd us into Christ-likeness.

Shortly after declaring this, in Ro 8:29 Paul also tells us that all believers are brothers in the Lord. In other words, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ we are not only reconciled to God, not only do we gain God himself as our perfect and wonderful Father, but also we gain all true believers as spiritual family members as well! Our spiritual family is our eternal family. It is a family built on the glory of Christ in his Gospel. It is a family ruled by God himself through his holy Word. It is a family that is filled with the Holy Spirit that produces godly fruit within each family member. It is a family that has an eternal inheritance in glory in the New Heavens and the New Earth with Jesus himself and as a family, we will enjoy his presence, majesty, and worth forever! It is a family that one day when our salvation is consummated and fully realized, will be as unified as the Trinity, and will love each other as the Father loves Christ. This family isn't built on the name of man, it isn't built on mere human lineage, it isn't built on any worldly thing, but rather, on Christ himself.

In Matthew 12:46-50 Jesus showed no favoritism towards his earthly family and instead said that those who are truly his mother and brothers and sisters are those who do the will of his Father. Our earthly families are very important, however, they are not eternal if our earthly family members are not in Christ. If they are not rooted and grounded in Christ and his Gospel, then our earthly families are missing the entire point for which they exist! We must continue to love and serve them with the hope that God may work and our earthly families can live into the purpose for which they were made. However, realizing the distinction between our unbelieving earthly family and the glory of our spiritual family, Jesus himself declares that his true and ultimate brothers and sisters and mothers are those who do the will of God, not those who share a common ancestry! The worshippers of God are truly his people in the ultimate sense, it is with them that he belongs, it is with the children of God that he is at home.

If that is true for Christ it is true for us. It is an unspeakable blessing when our earthly family members are also part of our spiritual family. Christ is life, he is our purpose and meaning, he is our aim and goal, and it is those with whom we share this life in him that we are at home with and the closest with. If you are a believer, and the people you feel closest with are those who are not Christians or those who are very weak in the Lord, that is a concern. I would like to help you with that if that is the case so please talk to me afterwards. Those who cherish Christ should be the closest with those who share a common adoration of Jesus. That doesn't mean we don't love unbelievers, or that we will not spend time with them, but as it pertains to relational closeness, how can light say their bff is darkness? When two people have such a completely different spiritual foundation for their lives and eternity, what commonality is there? How can lovers of Christ and haters of Christ be intimate and extremely close?

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3. Working out Life in Christ

As the family of God, as brothers and sisters in the Lord, we truly are a spiritual family now, not just at the resurrection. We truly have the Spirit now, we truly bear the fruit of the Spirit now, we truly have fellowship with each other and are capable of great intimacy now, not just in glory. Nevertheless, there is also the painful reality that not one Christian is yet perfected. Every believer, or family member of God's spiritual household still has remaining sin and immaturity. We are not fully conformed to the image of Christ and this reality is ever with us. So both a very real realization of the love, unity, joy, and sweet fellowship we have in Christ is a genuine reality in this life, and the presence of remaining sin, conflicts, weakened relationships, broken relationships, strife, and difficulty are a reality in this life as well.

The most mature Christians recognize that there is real love and fellowship to be had in this life, they pursue it, they live into it, and when the reality of remaining sin reveals its ugly presence and causes relationships to not work out how they had hoped, they don't pout, they don't give up, they don't stop trying to grow in relationships, they don't allow themselves to be hardened by cynicism and believe that the reality of authentic Christian fellowship, oneness, love, and unity really doesn't exist in this life. They understand it is a process. They understand that they themselves are part of the problem, they understand the cross washes us daily, they understand God does a long and patient work in his people, they understand that not everything comes right away, they understand God will complete his work in his church, and through their hurts and disappointments they resist the temptation of petty self-pity, and with Gospel toughness and perseverance they walk out the sometimes difficult, but always blessed calling of real Christian love.

So many people experience the reality of remaining sin in the church and then, because they are so self-absorbed, they pout, and they embrace cynicism about the church, and to keep themselves from ever being disappointed again, they live very weak, unloving, self-absorbed, powerless lives in the Lord, as they sink into a demonic lovelessness and withdrawal from the body that they have justified because at some point in their life in the church they were hurt or disappointed by believers. These same people, when they are in this mindset, never feel the weight of their own sins and contributions to the problems, even if their words hypocritically acknowledge their sins. They mope around and are filled with a very disaffected heart and mindset towards God's people, who are the reward for Christ's suffering, and in their words, attitudes, and demeanor are they very hopeless for Christ's bride, and to be around them is to come away feeling very depleted and discouraged.

It is in the unavoidable reality of conflict in God's family where which type of person you are will be revealed. True, genuine, life in the body will show you who you are and not necessarily who you think you are. It is in the blessings, joys, fellowships, and the crucible of conflict in the body where, if you are the immature Christian, God will sanctify you and make you mature and strong in him. When conflict arises among us as the family of God, and it will, our text tonight reminds us that we must approach each other as dear and beloved family members. It is so tragic to me that we are willing to overlook so many sins and flaws in our earthly, unconverted, family members and bear with them because they are our natural brothers, sisters, children, or parents, but when it comes to our eternal family, we are so quick to cut ties with each other over the same flaws. It is a blasphemous way of life and is a living contradiction to the Gospel we confess if we are the ones who abandon our spiritual brothers and sisters so quickly. Jesus said our love for each other will be the light to the world that wins unbelievers. We are one, we are God's temple, we are Christ's body, we are God's family. We are family! We are family! And I know right now exactly what the critical thing running through every

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mind in this room is, and so I want to just address it right now. You hear me say, "We are family," and what goes through your mind over and over again in agonizing pain is that stupid song, "We are family!" So let's just acknowledge that, confess it to God, and ask his help to grow us during the rest of this sermon!

On a more serious note, before we dive into the text, I want to tell you all how proud I am of so many of you because I have seen you stick through very difficult situations you have found yourselves in when experiencing conflict in the church. Some things have been hard, difficult, and heart-breaking, and you have persevered, worked through, confessed, repented, forgiven, and borne long and I think of all of the wonderful fruit I have seen in your lives, this is what I am most proud of you for, because I know how difficult it is, and nothing shows the sufficiency of a crucified savior who died for rebels more than God's own people putting to death bitterness, pride, unforgiveness, and strife through living out the Cross-centered life and I praise God and commend you for how wonderfully you've shown this to me, even if the process was messy and beset by sin. So thank you for showing me Jesus in that way. Our text tonight is 1 Titus 5:1-2

II. Defining Versus 1-2

1. Family Conflict

Now leading up to this passage, it is important to remember that Paul has commanded Timothy to devote and discipline his life for godliness, he is to be committed to holding to sound doctrine, to using his gifts to teach God's Word, that he is to exhort his hearers to follow these commands, and that as he does so there will inevitably be resistance to his ministry. Timothy was experiencing a resistance to his ministry on the grounds that he was young. Paul commanded Timothy not to allow anyone to despise his youth, or to point to Timothy's age as just grounds for not heeding his biblical exhortations. Paul just finished commanding Timothy in these things and we must keep that in mind as we read our text. (Read 1 Ti. 5:1-2)

In the life of the church there are various types of people who, as our family members, are in different stages of life. Some are older men and are to be regarded as fathers, some are older women and are to be regarded as mothers, the younger men are to be regarded as brothers, and the younger women as sisters with all purity. I am going to argue from the text that we are to regard each other as beloved family members, especially during conflict when we have to have discussions with each other about various problems. Setting before our hearts and minds that we are dealing with spiritual family members in our conflicts will season and guide our conflict resolution in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel. So let's breakdown the text.

2. No rebukes? Really? Vs. 1

I personally believe, having looked at the original language, that the ESV is extremely misleading in verse 1 when it says, "Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father..." Don't ever rebuke older men, just encourage them, is a view someone might construct from this wording, which I believe is irresponsible. Not only is this command not to rebuke but encourage being applied to older men, but also to all people as the text goes onto tell Timothy that he is also to do this towards the other types of people mentioned in the text as well. The problem with taking the position that there is not to be rebuke in the church but only encouragement, is that it completely contradicts the entire letter of 1 Timothy, how Paul himself constantly carries himself, and it is just utterly and thoroughly unbiblical.

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Keep in mind that Paul just finished telling Timothy not to let anybody despise his youth. When would someone be tempted to do that? It is when Timothy is rebuking their sin or false doctrine with his biblical exhortations. Paul just told Timothy to immerse himself in a faithful ministry of the Word that will so exhort others to repent and grow in Christ, that some are going to be offended and wrongly resist his ministry because of his age. So is Paul now in verse 1 telling him when that happens that he can't rebuke anybody and he is only to encourage them? I don't believe that is the case at all because not only would he be directly contradicting what he just said at the end of chapter 4, but also Paul himself had rebuked Hymenaeus and Alexander to the tune of disciplining them out of the church because of their blasphemies in 1:18-20. In 4:1-5 Paul strongly rebuked false Gospels that were being spread in the church and he commanded Timothy to do the same in 4:6. In 6:17-19 Paul tells Timothy to charge the rich to be rich in good deeds, to be generous, and ready to share. Well what if they refuse? Is Timothy not to rebuke them because of what we find in 5:1? In writing to another young pastor Paul told Titus in Titus 2:15 to, "Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you." Is he teaching two fundamentally different approaches to ministry when addressing Timothy and Titus? The answer to all of these questions is a resounding, "no." Looking more closely at the words, and at better English translations on this verse, we can gain much clarity.

3. Rebuke and encourage defined

As we look at the word rebuke in verse 1, it is a translation of the Greek word, "Epiplepso," which only appears in this verse, and it doesn't merely mean rebuke, but rather, it carries with it the idea of strong rebuke, even a verbally violent rebuke. One Greek dictionary I looked at defined it as, "To strike at someone with your words." This is why the NIV and the NASB, in my opinion, rightly translates this verse and does a much better job of capturing the accurate meaning by saying, "Do not sharply (or harshly NIV) rebuke an older man..." It is not rebuke as such that is forbidden, but a kind of rebuke that is violent, not self-controlled, unloving, sinful, hateful, and filled with animosity and bitterness.

The other part to verse one is that not only is sharp rebuke forbidden, but as the ESV puts it, "encouragement," is to be given. Again, I think that is an awful and irresponsible way to translate the Greek word here, which is, "parakalei." I think it is irresponsible, not because "encourage" isn't a real part of the range of meaning of this word, but because it can very much unintentionally communicate that we are not to ever rebuke each other but are only to encourage each other. As I already mentioned, that interpretation contradicts the entire letter of 1 Timothy as well as the immediate context. This word can also mean, "To exhort; to urge; or, to appeal to." When trying to determine what range of meaning best fits a word you are translating, context always has to determine meaning. Based on the flow of thought from chapter 4, I think translating this word as, "appeal to him as a Father," which is how the NASB and the NKJV translates it, is a much better option that fits the context really well, rather than threatens to unintentionally contradict the context as the ESV does.

So the idea here is that when Timothy is discharging his ministry, when his youth is despised or when for any other reason people in the congregation will not walk in sound doctrine or consistent godliness, the way in which he is to rebuke them is not to be harsh and violent about it, but rather, to lovingly appeal to them as family members. I can hear Proverbs 12:18 ringing through 1 Timothy 5:1 which says, "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." When rebuking you can cut with your words like a soldier with a sword whose intentions are to kill. Or, you can cut like a surgeon whose intentions are to heal. Both people cut, but one cuts out of evil violence, out of a desire to punish and harm, and out of a desire to tear down and destroy, while the other cuts, to

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rid a loved family member of something harmful that they might be healed, that they might grow, that they might be stronger, and that they might be more like Jesus. Paul's command to Timothy is that he is to seek to bring healing through his tongue when he corrects and not to destroy people. That is the meaning of verse 1 Timothy 5:1.

For clarity I want to acknowledge that there are many times where there are minor sins, flaws, and weaknesses in believers that do not need to be addressed. Timothy is not to wrist slap over every little flaw. However, if Timothy is unwilling to correct, he is a false prophet who does nothing but tickle the itching ears of worldly people who cherish sin, and we know from Jeremiah and Ezekiel that it is a sign of a false prophet to only declare peace and safety to sinners if there is no true peace. Godly correction must be part of every faithful ministry, and to help Timothy do this, Paul wisely goes through every possible season of life someone in the congregation can be in, and tells Timothy to address them as family members. Addressing them as family should season his heart, fill him with love and longing for them, and cause him to correct them rightly. Occasionally, as we see in Titus 1:13 when rebuking the lazy men in Crete, believers are to be rebuked sharply, however, even when that is done, it is to be done with tact and self-control. But, most of the time, our default setting is to operate with clear, direct, yet loving and kind correction to our beloved family in Christ. We will now spend the rest of the message meditating on how to do this to various members of our spiritual family, which is the church.

III. Correcting the Family

1. Fathers

So the first group of people Paul instructs Timothy in how to address is older men, whom he says are to be addressed as fathers. Now the word for older men, is presbuteros, which is the word used for elder in other contexts, and so one could conclude Paul is telling Timothy how to address pastors. I personally think he is instructing him in how to address older men in general, which would also apply to pastors and deacons. They are not to be violently attacked with reckless correction, instead, they are to be lovingly appealed to as father figures.

A father is to be someone who loves his family, serves his family, works hard for his family, provides for his family, leads his family, and sets the direction and tone for the family. He engages them, loves them, gives them time and attention, he offers encouragement and support, he offers correction, he offers guidance, he leads the family in the Word of God, he prays for them regularly, and he uses his authority and God-given strength to become a servant to his family according to what the Bible says they need, which may not always be what they want. His chief longing and desire for his family is to see them grow and thrive in the faith and to love Jesus Christ supremely and so he gives himself to facilitate that in whatever way he can.

No father of any family is perfect, and that is exactly why Paul addresses how an older man, or an elder in the church is to be addressed when it is time to appeal to them to take action when it is needed. Despite the imperfections of good fathers, they are to be respected, loved, honored, and held in high esteem, even when being corrected. If you correct an older man, and your heart is thankful to God for the fatherly role this person fills, if your heart is grateful for how this man has served the body, and if your heart loves such a one and honors them as the authority that God has made them to be, you are going to have a very different spirit, demeanor, and attitude about you than if you are acting like a disrespectful, bratty child.

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Paul's exhortation is not to deal with pastors or older men in the church as though they are infallible popes who cannot ever be questioned or addressed, but rather, when this takes place it is to be done with the honor and respect due to a loving father. It might go something like, "Person X, I am very grateful for your role in my life and the lives of others as a spiritual father figure. You have been a great blessing to many and I thank God for leaders like you. In my desire to see your leadership continue to thrive, I want to address issue x with you. I feel like if this was dealt with, it would strengthen and enhance what is already a great blessing to many. I love you and I want to not only continue to see you lead well, but also, to lead even better as I know that would be an even greater blessing to others who have already been so richly encouraged..." That is so different than indulging a petty and vindictive tongue lashing towards those who are older men in the church. A good father will listen, process, and respond in holiness and love, and the result will be a greater familial intimacy in the household of God.

2. Younger Men as Brothers

The next group Paul guides Timothy in how to address is younger men and he tells them to regard, "younger men as brothers." Younger men in the Lord are a great blessing because they often have tremendous zeal and energy for God. The challenge with that is that this zeal can be short-sighted, it can lack a much needed further understanding, it can be blinded to other important issues that need to be considered, and there can be a lacking maturity that can be a hindrance. So, correction is a significant part of being in a loving relationship with a godly younger man, whom we are to regard as brothers.

In this relationship Timothy is in the role of an older brother. A good brother is someone who genuinely cares sincerely about his brother. He might see his brother struggling, and rather than beat him down, humiliate him, destroy him, or harm him, he steps up and strengthens his brother. When others are destroying his brother, he has his brother's back. When his brother is going astray, he doesn't passively stand by and watch his brother get destroyed, instead, he steps in and corrects his brother as one who is a strong part of his life. As one who comes from the same Father, as one who is part of the same family, as one who is committed to his brother's spiritual well-being, as one who is a committed part of his life, as one who will walk through the most difficult times with him, as one who is not going to aid him in destroying his life in sin, but who will lovingly stand and appeal to him to walk in holiness, to represent the family well, and to live a life worthy of our heavenly Father he will appeal to him to walk in the Spirit. The correcting brother knows the erring brother and as he shares he is woven into his life, he enjoys his brother, he is bonded to his brother, and he looks forward to many years of sharing Christ in a real way with his brother. So if that is his heart towards his brother, with what spirit do you think he will correct his brother in?

He may say something like, "Brother, I love you so much and I am so grateful that I have been able to grow up in the Lord with you. It is a precious thing to have someone to share the same season of life with. I have so often been encouraged by your faith in Christ and your striving for him in my life. You have stirred me to love and good deeds many times. But I need to address this issue with you because I believe it is harming you. As your brother I am going to stand up for you, and take on this spiritual enemy that is trying to ruin you, by addressing this in your life. I love you and my heart is to commit myself to your continued progress in Christ likeness. So the issue is...and I just want to plead with you to turn from this as I believe it is harming you in ___ way. I love you and long for your growth."

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A humble and teachable brother is going to receive this, be thankful for it, even if it stings in the moment, thank God that he has a real brother who actually loves him, rather than a man-pleasing hypocrite who will not seek his true good. He will deal with the issue, and the brothers will be closer as a result. This may take time. The erring brother may not initially receive the correction. He may walk through a dark season for a while, but it is the hope of the correcting brother, that God will move, and in due time the erring brother will be repentant and oneness will be restored.

3. Older women as mothers

The next group Timothy will have to address as a minister is older women, and Paul tells him to address, "older women as mothers..." A godly mother is someone who has a wonderful influence in the home. Her presence is the aroma of Christ to her family. There is a kindness to her, a sweetness to her, a way about her that makes the home personalized, loving, warm, hospitable, and nurturing that causes the family members to enjoy Jesus in a very enriched way. She nurtures her children, she instructs her children, she is an example of divine strength as she looks upon the difficult days ahead with great confidence in her God and stands in his grace and is a vessel that dispenses hope in God to her home. In wonderful humility she engages and fulfills so many tasks that seem menial to others, that go unseen, but are nevertheless precious in the sight of God. She passes on a legacy of faith, worship, holiness, love, and faithfulness to God to her family. Her family is the object of her prayers, and the family is confident that she is there for them, committed to them, and her presence has a calming, stabilizing, and soothing effect on her home that helps her family grow in their confidence in Christ. Her children are supremely confident that she cares for them in a Christ-centered way, and oh how worthy of respect and honor she is.

As with good fathers, no mother is perfect either. She is a wonderful blessing but she is not Jesus, and she is one who is saved by the same Gospel as everyone else, and she has her own sin and weakness to deal with. Nevertheless she is to be revered. In correcting such a woman, what kind of respect, attitude, and spirit should she be addressed in? You may say something like, "So and so, I just want you to know that the feminine strength you exude in Christ, the peace in which you carry yourself, the stability of your walk, the love of others you are so devoted to showing, the detail in which you care for other people in small ways is so appreciated by me and others as well. You are a very important part of our lives and we thank God for you. Because you are so dear to us, there is something I want to address with you. (Then clearly, kindly, and fairly state the issue). I just want to appeal to you with all of my heart as one who is so appreciative of your presence in our life, that you consider this and excel still more in this area in your walk."

How effective do you think such an appeal will be? Likely it will be very effective. There's no guarantee it will be received well, but I am willing that with God's people it will be more often than it won't be. When you correct someone with that type of spirit, who can bring a charge against you? Regard older women as mothers as you correct them, and you will find a much greater maturity and love accompanies your correction.

4. Younger Women

The last group Timothy is to address is younger women and Paul says to address, "younger women as sisters with all purity." Again, Timothy is to assume the role of an older brother towards a younger sister here and as he addresses her he is to do so with, "all purity." It is important to note that younger women have the added exhortation to be addressed with all purity. I think this is present because Paul knows, and certainly the Holy Spirit who inspired Paul knows that

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when younger women are being ministered to by men in the church, certain bonds can be created that if not dealt with in ways that have proper boundaries around them, can lead both into temptation and sexual sin. Many pastors have fallen into sexual immorality that began with counseling younger women. What starts off as a good thing can quickly be twisted by Satan and plunged into ruin. So efforts must be taken that Timothy minister to and correct younger women in all purity. Perhaps it is meeting in public, or taking your wife along with you, or meeting in group settings, whatever it is, efforts are to be made to ensure these interactions happen in all purity.

We are to love the women in our church and have appropriate and godly interactions with them. But we must remember we are their holy family as we do this. A good brother guards the purity of his sister. If someone is coming onto her with ill intentions it is usually the brother who spots this out faster than anybody and he is ready to fight if he must to defend the honor and purity of his sister. He helps his sister grow in Christ, he guides her and builds their relationship on the holy worship of God, and he will fight off that which would defile her purity, whether it be doctrinal purity, sexual purity, or any other kind of purity, because he has a brotherly love for her in all godliness. He is not one who comes masked as a brother and then tries to reel her into situations in which he seeks to steal her purity! That is a demonic brother not a Christian one! He cares primarily for her soul, but also for her physical well-being, and as a brother who will fight the forces of hell with all of his might to defend his sister's godliness in Christ, he is to appreciate and cherish his dear sister, who has no doubt countless times supported him as he has followed Christ. His dear sister has prayed for him, counseled him, helped him, fed him, met his needs, and encouraged him to love Jesus more and more as he has been inspired by the godly devotion of his sweet Christian sister whom he loves deeply with all purity.

As much as he loves his sister, if he is a good brother, he will be aware of the times his sweet sister needs correction. It can come in many forms, but often times it is most needed when the sister is considering dating or marrying someone who is not godly. The loving older brother must fight for his sister's purity in these moments, but he must appeal to her in love, not harsh sword thrusts.

He might say, "Dear sister, I am so thankful for our relationship in Christ. It is such a constant encouragement to me that I have been so supported by you, strengthened by you, convicted by you, and blessed by you in countless ways as we have enjoyed Christ together. I can't wait to see what God has in store for you as you commit to walking in him more and more. I have to tell you that as your brother I am charged with protecting your soul, and right now I see that the guy you are interested in, though he claims to love Jesus, his life contradicts his profession of faith. He has no desire to be with God's people, he is never in the Word of God, and all he talks about is worldly things. When you talk about him I have never one time heard you say that his influence causes you to cherish Jesus more and more. So as your brother who loves you so much, I want to appeal to you to please back off of this relationship because I think it is not healthy for your soul. I know it is hard to wait, I am praying God will bring you someone, but trust me when I say as your brother who loves you that you want it to be the right guy who loves Jesus more than anything! I promise when that guy shows up I will rejoice to see you be with him, but I just don't see it right now with the one you are with."

That kind of encouragement has a much greater chance of being received by a godly sister than a brother saying, "Hey sis, the guy you are dating is a loser and I can't stand him and you're stupid for being with him." The younger ladies in the church are our dear sisters in Christ, we must care for them, honor them, protect their pure devotion to Christ, and we have to be there for them, we have to help provide for them, we have to fight off the wolves that try to ravage them,

Life in God's Family

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Reggie Sanchez, Gospel Community Church, 10/01/2017

and we have to labor to present them holy to Christ, and we dare not ourselves be vile wolves who are willing partners in their destruction! These are our sisters! We must love them as God would have us love them!

Beloved of God, you are his children and we are his family together as one. God cares so deeply for his family that he sent his family member, his Son Jesus Christ, to die for us so that he could adopt us, into his family, even though all we did was murder his Son by nailing him to a cross. He suffered momentary division in his family when he forsook his Son on the cross as he was pouring wrath on him for our sin, so that we can enter into his family! When he saw our sin, he didn't run away from us, he didn't say there is no hope for us, he didn't hate us and destroy us, instead, he came and lived among us and died for us to make us his own. It was costly, he had to correct us, rebuke us, teach us, provide for us, and die for us, to make us part of his family. If Jesus did that for you to make you part of this family, should you not also bear with and love your spiritual family members in like manner?

I know love is hard, but it is so worth it. Don't let some bad experiences justify a life of self-pity, a life of cynicism, and a life of keeping God's people at a distance. It will only destroy you. I have known several people who do that and trust me you do not want to be where they are spiritually. We are family in Christ, and we will always be imperfect, but we are also always real, if we are in him. Let us love, let us press on to love our dear family in Christ, we are God's treasured ones! His people are not your enemy, Satan, sin, and the world are. Let's fight the real enemy, not our eternal family.