



# First Timothy

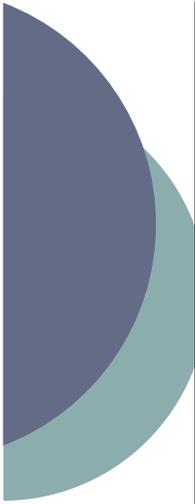
# Fair Treatment

**For Ministers in the Church**

**I Timothy 5:17-20**

**Lesson Twenty-Five**

*Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex Curriculum*



# First Timothy

## A Study of the First Letter of the Apostle Paul to His Son in the Faith

### **Fair Treatment**

Today, we follow Paul from his discussion of the fair treatment of widows to the fair treatment of those who serve as ministers in the church. He refers to them as elders. These are obviously persons in the church who the church has chosen to be leaders. Read I Timothy 5:17-20.

We know that there were always several leaders of the churches in Paul's day. Every time the word elders is used in the New Testament it is plural, which means it always speaks of more than one person. Very likely some had responsibilities to make arrangements for meetings, some had responsibility for the finances, some had responsibility for helping people—possibly supervising the work of the deacons, some had responsibility for guiding the worship time, and some were to preach and teach.

Paul told Timothy that these persons, if they did a good job of “directing the affairs of the church,” were worthy of double honor. What that means is that the church should recognize them as being worth supporting, maybe even more than the widows who made a pledge to serve the church. He makes it clear that those who preach and teach should be supported. Why? Well we can assume that they had to give a lot of time to preparing for their job of helping the Christians know more about God...time for study and getting ready spiritually.

To be sure that they understood his meaning, he quoted two Bible verses. First, from Deuteronomy 25:4, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is trading out the grain.” When the wheat was cut down, it was brought to a place where the ground was packed very hard, or maybe a flat surface was built. The wheat was placed on the flat surface and oxen were led around on the grain and their hooves would break apart the pods and expose the good grain. While the oxen were working, they would get hungry. Someone might put a muzzle over their mouth so that they would not eat the grain. However, the instruction was, don't do that. Leave the oxen free to eat, so that they were healthy and happy and could do well in their work.

The second verse quoted is from the New Testament. In Luke 10:7, Jesus said, “The worker deserves his wages.” Jesus was sending out his disciples to preach. He said that they should accept offers of a place to stay, and food when they needed it. The disciples were working for Jesus, and they deserved to be given a place to stay and food to eat.

So, Paul here is saying to Timothy and the church at Ephesus that those who served the church, especially those who had to give so much time to preparation for preaching and teaching, were due some consideration from the church...provision of the necessities of life...food and shelter. You may remember, when the church in Jerusalem was very young, the Apostles who were the



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preachers and teachers of the church, told the church that they needed more time for studying the Word of God, so the church needed to select some deacons (servants) to help out. (Acts 6:1-7) It is clear that Paul is talking about that kind of responsibility when he talks about preachers and teachers in our Scripture for today.

If we bring this teaching up to our time, churches often pay their pastors a salary so that they can give all their time to church ministry. And, larger churches can afford to pay more than one minister so that they have several ministers who do other kinds of ministry.

Next, in verses nineteen and twenty, Paul turns to the other side of fair treatment for ministers. He talks about ministers who are accused of doing something wrong. He said, don't take the word of only one person. It seems that Paul is reminding the church of the Old Testament requirement of two or three witnesses needed to convict someone of doing a bad thing. (Deuteronomy 19:15) Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 18:16.

It seems that it was then, as it is now, a temptation for someone to try to give the minister a bad name by accusing them of doing bad things. If only one witness is required, then one person could destroy the reputation of a minister and the church he or she serves. The Devil is just hanging out, waiting for a minister to fail. And, even if the minister doesn't fail, the Devil can get his way by tempting someone to tell a lie about that minister. The sad thing is that some of the time, people don't need to have proof of the sin, they will just take the word of someone who tells a lie and convict the minister in their minds without a trial.

When that happens, the Devil is very happy and watches while the work of the church is hurt. The defeat of the minister becomes a victory for Satan. Paul had been falsely accused many times, and had been punished over and over for crimes he had not committed. He knew it could happen.

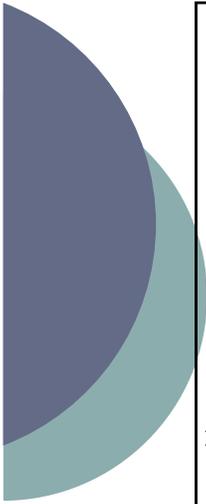
But, Paul goes on to say that if someone is truly guilty of a sin, that person should be publicly corrected. His instruction is to make it public so that others will see the wrong, and will be warned that if they do something similar, they too will be embarrassed.

Does this give us permission to publicly embarrass church leaders? Absolutely not. God will judge the individual who does that. Remember Paul said that the sin had to be witnessed by more than one person. That means that it was a public sin. Since a public sin could embarrass the church, it should be publicly corrected. However, putting a minister's sin on Facebook, or publicizing it some other way, should be left up to the church, not an individual.

\*Underlined words and phrases are to be used in completing the Student Worksheet.

**Lesson Goal:** To encourage students to treat ministers fairly.

**Scripture Memory:** "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." I Timothy 5:17



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## Student Worksheet—Following Through

### Fair Treatment—I Timothy 5:17-20

>Why would those who teach and preach in the church deserve more support than others?

>What two verses did Paul quote in our lesson for today, and what did that mean for the church in Timothy's day and in our day?

>What did Paul say about taking the word of one witness?

>The Devil is just hanging out, waiting for a \_\_\_\_\_ to fail. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the minister becomes a \_\_\_\_\_ for Satan.

>Paul goes on to say that if a minister is convicted of a \_\_\_\_\_, that person should be publicly corrected. Putting a minister's sin on \_\_\_\_\_, or publicizing it some other way, should be left up to the \_\_\_\_\_, not an individual.

**For Memory: "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." I Timothy 5:17**

#### How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God's Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus' name. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.