

Summer 2020



1 Timothy 5:1–2

5 Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

Reflection

In our Summer Series for A Year with Jesus we have prepared some short devo-

tions on some of our favourite passages of Scripture, the type of passages that many people have committed to memory. But memory verses should not always be warm and comfortable. Some of them should be searching, so that we can call them to mind in times of temptation and be rebuked by them in times of sin. Today's passage is one such as these. It comes from 1 Timothy 5, a book of the bible especially meant for those who would lead others and be examples to them in the faith. 1 Timothy 5:1–2 says,

5 Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

Absolute purity. If ever there was a passage for this day and age it is this. A casual glance at the headlines in today's paper will confirm that ours is not a generation of absolute purity. These verses are more than wise advice for Christians who aspire to leadership in the church. They are more than wise counsel for the good order of Christian communities which God would have us understand as our extended family. They are more than this. These verses are words of command. We're not to rebuke our elders harshly, but instead exhort them as fathers and mothers whom we love. And we are to treat younger men as brothers, and younger women as sisters – with absolute purity.

But it is so hard. The world in which we

live is filled with lust of the eyes. There are screens everywhere, a never-ending passing parade of the enticements of our culture and many of these are sexualised. The average person checks their phone forty-six times a day, and spends three hours watching mobile devices, all in addition to the hours on end that they spend on their computers at work and watching television at home. Against this barrage of temptation, in a culture enslaved and enamoured by sexual sin, we are called to absolute purity.

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We are called to absolute purity because

the one who calls us is perfectly holy and absolutely pure. 1 John 3:3 says,

3 All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Romans 6:12 is similarly helpful, in saying,

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Faith in Jesus results in a changed life, a desire to be holy as he is holy (1 Pet 1:16), and a desire to give yourself over to the Holy Spirit as he guides you in the pursuit of holiness (Heb 12:14). But Christians are also called to obedience and hard work. As 1 John 3:3 says, all who genuinely put their hope in Jesus will purify themselves.

And as Paul adds, therefore we are not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies and thereby obey its evil desires.

We don't live as slaves in a kingdom of sin, we live as citizens of the kingdom of God, a kingdom characterised by purity and holiness. And so we ...

Treat younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

... in person, in private and over the internet.

Think & Pray

Spend some time reflecting over this pas-

sage of Scripture. And if sexual sin reigns in your life, if you regularly fail when it comes to absolute purity, then confess it to our Lord. Ask for his forgiveness and his help. Sin need not reign in our mortal bodies. We have been set free by his grace. And yet our sinful nature and the enticements of our culture mean that there are pitfalls everywhere – but we need not fail. Pray for self-discipline and obedience. Pray that your vision of God would reach new heights and that your hatred of sin would grow to match his own, so that you may daily overcome the traps and snares of sexual sin. Committing this passage to memory, and calling it often to mind will help, 1 Timothy 5:1–2,

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