

5: living lives that honour others

Every congregation is composed of all different types of people, and every person is unique. The basic principle of a church that cares is *diversity*. Every congregation, small or large, must become a place where each person is treated and cared for as an individual. Yet many things in the life of the church work against this ideal.

open it Think about a time when you were 'new' or 'different.' It may have been a new job, a new school, a different cultural experience, or simply walking into a room where you did not know anyone. How did it *feel*? What helped you embrace the new environment? Share stories together.

read it **1 Timothy 5.1-16** - this is an unusual passage and it seems that Paul is thinking about specific circumstances. Nevertheless, there are things here that we will want to pull out as important for our church and times too. **List the different types of people that are mentioned in the passage.**

What does Paul tell Timothy about how to treat people?

Pick out some of the specific verses.

Sum up the meaning of this section in a sentence or two.

apply it Paul seems to be suggesting that older people need treating tenderly and younger people need a challenge! **Do you agree with this approach? Is it a universal principle? How do you see this working out in practice?**

Much of this passage concerns the treatment of widows. Read the '**Window on the Widows**' box, and think together about the principles that we can draw from what Paul writes.

Are there any people, other than widows, who need special care and treatment:

- in our Church?
- in our community?
- in our world?

live it

Our culture seems to operate on the basis that we have to earn respect, but that passage tells us that honouring others is akin to godliness. That is a very different *modus operandi*! **How might remembering that every person is made in the image of God influence how we treat others?**

How do we treat others with honour? What might it look like?

pray it

Spend some time praying for those who you have identified in your conversations. We pray, too, for ourselves, that we might honour the Lord by honouring others.

A Window on the Widows

It's very difficult for those who have grown up in caring families, surrounded by a network of friendships and relationships, and covered by health care, social security, and pension plans, to begin to identify with the plight of the widow in the times and places of the Bible. Her first problem was being a woman. She had no way of working to provide for herself outside of the home. If she had no children or grandchildren to provide for her, she was utterly without any source of help. There would be no source of income, no capital with which to work—only a roof over her head, if she were fortunate, with whatever might be in the house. If the church did not care for her, no one else would. There were no community agencies or programs. The world was uncaring.