

The sermon

Intro

I won't do it every year. But this year I wanted a passage that spoke to mothers.

Mother's Day is something worth celebrating. Because God designed motherhood. As we've seen in Genesis, it was God's idea to make a man and a woman that would multiply and fill the earth. Birth, the family unit, parents raising children, this was all God's idea. And it was God who commanded, "*Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you*" (Exod 20:12). It's right to respect mothers. And it's right to give thanks to those who've served you and cared for you.

As we've also seen in Genesis, mankind is good at corrupting God's world. Thus, the flood. Like everything else in life, we can mess up motherhood and godly womanhood. Like everything else in life, we need spiritual growth, new patterns, character. Godliness is a learning experience. So is motherhood. So Paul has some concerns he wants to pass on to the ladies in the church.

What makes the church look dignified? What prevents the church from being ridiculed? Paul's answers are interesting.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Point 1: The character of older men (2:1-2)

But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. – 2:1

"But" indicates a contrast.

There were false teachers who were contradicting sound doctrine (1:9), which included Jewish myths (1:14) = manmade fictions.

"sound doctrine" = healthy doctrine = healthy teaching = healthy content. My job as a pastor/teacher is to give you biblical truth that's good for your souls. God's word moves you from doubt to faith, from despair to confidence, from misery to joy, from anxiety to peace. God's chosen to use his word to remake our hearts!

Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. – 2:2

What a pastor says to older men. Yes, we'll address older men on Mother's day. It's okay.

What's an older man? A man advanced in years. In Titus' day, a man who's done having children. A man whose children are now adults with children of their own. Grandfather age.

What does Paul say to older men? Be these things. Virtues for all men, whether young or old or teenager or grade school. Virtues for women too.

"sober-minded" = self-controlled in terms of restraint/sobriety. Not out of control like a drunk person.

"dignified" = behavior that's honorable and worthy of respect.

"self-controlled" = sensible. I go with the NASB and the CSB here. This person leads a self-controlled life because they're prudent and thoughtful. Their mind is healthy. They're not out of control because they're wise: God's word regulates their actions.

“sound in faith” = same word for sound/healthy doctrine. Sound faith because it’s governed by God’s word, not cultural opinion, their feelings, personal preference, etc. Their trust is in the Jesus revealed in the Bible.

The person who believes that if they’re obedient to God they’re guaranteed health and wealth isn’t **“sound in faith.”** They’re trusting in something God hasn’t promised. So their faith isn’t healthy, it’s harmful.

sound **“in love”** = their love is healthy, rooted in truth. They love God for who he truly is. They love their brothers and sisters in Christ. Their family. Their neighbor.

sound **“in steadfastness”** = a healthy perseverance in the faith. When hard times come, they endure. They continue. They keep trusting Jesus.

Application

Big idea? Older men in the church are supposed to develop virtuous character over time. Like the older women, they’re supposed to be an example and encourage the younger men to fulfill their duties well.

Practical question: how am I progressing in these virtues?

Point 2: The character of older women (2:3)

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. – 2:3

Like the older men, older women should be self-controlled, dignified, and sound in faith.

“Older women” = too old to conceive; don’t have children in the home; possibly widows.

Paul uses the language **“reverent in behavior”** with two negative examples:

1. **“not slanderers”** = malicious, false speech intended to injure a person’s reputation.
2. **“not...slaves to much wine”** = ruled by alcohol, one who gets drunk, drinking enough alcohol that if pulled over by a police officer you’d be violating the blood/alcohol limit.

Reverent behavior is dignified behavior. Honorable behavior that flows from a devotion to God. Dignified/reverent behavior comes through self-control. Self-control comes through faith. The one who is **“sound in faith”** is in position to exercise self-control. How does this work?

I read the Scriptures. I memorize the Scriptures. I meditate on the Scriptures. I attend the Sunday morning service. I attend Sunday school. I attend a small group Bible study. I read Christian books saturated with biblical content. I have conversations with my fellow believers about Scripture. My heart is saturated with God’s truth. My faith is shaped by the Bible, so it’s healthy. And these aren’t just ideas I’m curious about and like to argue about. I believe with all my heart God’s word is right and true. Following Jesus is good for me. I believe ignoring God’s word will ruin my life. So, through the Scriptures I’ve become **“sober-minded”** and my desires have become Godward. I’m self-controlled because my heart is regulated by faith in God. I don’t want to slander people and I don’t want to be ruled by alcohol (= drunk) so I exercise rule over my mouth: words and what I drink.

We fail to possess self-control when we’re ruled by fallen habits that haven’t yet been formed by Scripture. When I get angry, I naturally turn to alcohol not prayer. What I get angry, I turn to slander, not Bible meditation. I haven’t learned how to constructively engage my anger so I keep the same fallen habits.

Application

We shouldn't be satisfied with refraining from slander. We should want edifying, helpful speech. There's things to avoid. There's things to do and be.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. – Ephesians 4:29

We shouldn't be satisfied with not getting drunk. We should want self-control over other areas of our life: food consumption, entertainment consumption, spending, desires, words, etc. The Christian life is a self-controlled life.

Big idea? The issue is we can be ruled by things. Whether alcohol, or something else.

Practical question: who or what is ruling my heart?

Point 3: The character of younger women (2:3-5)

Caveats

There are exceptions, but the assumption is, the young women will be married and have children. A single man himself, Paul counsels the norm.

If you find yourself outside the norm, you should be pursuing virtues relevant to all Christians: loving fellow believers in the church, self-control, purity, kindness, submission to authorities in your life. There's obedience to be had for those outside the norm.

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women – 2:3-4

Older women, set an example for the younger women in the church. Older women, counsel the younger women on what they should value.

The ESV's "*and so train*" fails to capture the "so that/in order that" other translations bring out. The idea is older women need godly character and the right set of categories ("*what is good*") in order to train the young women well.

to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. – 2:4-5

Here's the categories that Paul wants the older women to teach the younger women. The basic, critical virtues.

1. "to love their husbands"

The same counsel Paul gives to the husbands. Marriages flourish when both sides love one another.

In my study of the usage of the love concept in the New Testament I've uncovered four central aspects: commitment, affection, actions, treasuring.

Commitment to one's husband. I'll never leave you nor forsake you. I'm not going anywhere. I'm with you till one of us dies. Relationships flourish with commitment. Husbands need to be able to say, "I can trust my wife. I can count on her. She's committed to me."

Affection for one's husband. Caring about his trials, his struggles with sin, his physical health, his spiritual well-being, his feelings.

Acting for her husband. Encouraging words when discouraged. Corrective words when he's erring. Alleviating his suffering, not adding to it. Helping him to thrive in the task(s) God's given him. Modeling respect before her children.

Treasuring her husband. You love what you treasure in your heart. Because she values her husband, she's committed to him, she cares him, and she acts for him.

If my former sister-in-law had older women in the church who said what you need to do is love your husband, would things have turned out differently?

2. *"to love their...children"*

She's committed to them. In it for the long haul. Even if they have a pattern of sinful choices. When they're slow to be doers of the word.

She cares about their feelings. Cares when a sibling teases them. Cares when they're bullied at school. Cares when they're sad if they didn't make the team or the girl they like doesn't like them back. Cares when they struggle to make friends. Cares about their spiritual well-being. Longs for them to treasure Jesus. Long for them to be dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith.

She acts for them. Reads them Bible stories. Disciplines them when they sin. Encourages the path of wisdom. Takes them to the doctor. Helps them with their math. Goes to food pantries so they can have food.

She treasures them. She gives, she cares, she endures. Because they matter to her.

If my former sister-in-law had older women in the church who said you need to love your children, would things have turned out differently?

Caution: love for husband and children aren't pitted against each other. You love both, not one or the other. When a mother is pressured to make a choice, she needs to remember love *"rejoices with the truth"* (1 Cor 13:6). She challenges those in error to obey God.

3. *"to be self-controlled"*

Love, work, submission. These require self-control.

4. *"pure"*

Pure means moral purity. Heart and behavior. Love for God and obedience.

5. *"working at home"*

The awful thing about this phrase is commentators spend more time saying what it doesn't mean than saying what it does mean.

I'll say this. Paul doesn't provide specifics. No number of hours required. No limitations placed on external work. Yes, the Proverbs 31 woman spends time creating merchandise (Prov 31:19) and leaves the home to sell the products she made (Prov 31:24).

What does this mean? Generic, open-ended, not detailed. Different homes, different needs. A case by case basis requiring wisdom.

She works inside the home. She carries out required duties. She completes tasks. Work isn't left undone. She's a hard-worker. She values her home. Her family thrives because she makes sure things get done. Like the Proverbs 31 woman, her family has everything they need to thrive (Prov 31:15, 21, 27; e.g., food, winter clothing).

Mothers, you can delegate some of the work to your children and husband.

6. *“kind”*

The idea is a useful, beneficial life. Helpful not harmful. Others flourish spiritually because she’s in their life.

7. *“submissive to their own husbands”*

To submit means to bring yourself under the rule of another. The idea is God has established male headship in the home. The husband leads. Yes, he’s supposed to sacrifice his selfish desires for the good of his wife and kids. Yes, his leadership is supposed to serve the spiritual and practical good of his family. But he leads. She willingly complies. Like making ultimate decisions. She doesn’t fight for control. He says this is what needs to be taking place in our home. She thinks of ways to implement it. She says to herself, “God’s design in the home is good and just and right.” When he’s misguided, in love, she challenges him respectfully with Scripture. Submitting to God’s authority, he says, you’re right.

that the word of God may not be reviled. – 2:5

Why the concern for older women to help influence younger women in marriage and motherhood? So that God’s word (Bible, gospel) won’t be ridiculed because of Christian people who aren’t dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith. Godly Christian homes make God look good! That’s Paul’s logic.

Application

What Paul’s after is Christian homes that value godly virtues. What Paul’s after is a church culture where the older women have been formed by God’s word and they’re encouraging younger women to be formed by God’s word. Older Christians setting the standard for younger Christians. That’s the church culture we want!

The assumption is younger Christians need guidance and godly models. These churches in Crete were relatively young (elders were recently appointed by Titus – 1:5), so these young church women weren’t raised in godly homes. Some of you younger women know how to do marriage and motherhood because your parents trained you well. For others, you need older Christian women to help guide you.

Note Paul doesn’t tell Titus to disciple the young women one on one. Paul tells Titus to get the older women to do it.

Older women, is this the counsel you’re giving the younger women? But I was never married? But I never had kids? You can at least encourage these basic forms of obedience. Love your husband. Love your children. Be self-controlled. Be pure. Be productive in the home. Be useful to your family. Submit to your husband.

Teenage girls, these are godly aspirations for you to pursue! Is this what you want to be?

Big idea? Marriage, mothering, and the Christian home matter. Because we want to make Jesus look good. This requires older women guiding younger women well.

Practical question: what am I modeling and instilling in newer Christians?

Conclusion

The Bible teaches that behavior is critical. The Bible issues command after command to regulate our conduct and warns us if we don’t measure up, we’ll be sentenced to hell on judgment day. The Bible also says we’re not saved by our behavior. Because none of us have perfectly kept God’s standard. We’re saved through faith in Jesus Christ. We’re saved through the merit of another. Jesus lived a sinless life and offered his body on the cross as substitute for our sins. If we trust in him, not ourselves, we’ll be rescued from our sins.

How do these fit together?

Simple answer. Jesus died to both forgive us from the penalty of sin and to rescue us from the power of sin. Jesus died so we could have peace with God. Total confidence that I'm forgiven, accepted, loved, and that my entrance into the heavenly city is a done deal. Jesus also died (and rose) so that we could have newness of life within. So that we'd be sober-minded, sensible people who use our mouths in helpful ways and aren't overcome by alcohol. So that our homes would be ruled by love and an unshakable confidence in the goodness of God's design for marriage and family.

If you haven't trusted in Jesus, Jesus invites you to find rest for your soul in his death and resurrection. Tell us if you believe.