

The School of Godliness:

How God trains His People through Ordinary Life

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Big Idea

God trains his people in godliness through ordinary embodied life, and the household is the primary school of Christian formation.

I. Introduction: The Household as God's Training Ground

A. The Problem We Feel but Rarely Name

1. Modern Christianity often seeks godliness in the *extraordinary*
2. Scripture locates godliness in the *ordinary*
 - a. Family
 - b. Work
 - c. Authority
 - d. Care for the vulnerable

B. Paul's Central Metaphor in 1 Timothy

1. The church as the household of God (**1 Timothy 3:15**)
2. The household of God is not abstract
 - a. It is patterned after the human household
 - b. It trains people *through* embodied responsibility

C. Why This Passage Matters

1. This is Paul's longest practical section in the letter
 2. Not about administration, but formation
 3. Widows are not the topic — *learning godliness* is
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II. Walkthrough of the Passage (5:1–6:2)

A. Family Language Shapes Christian Conduct (5:1–2)

1. Older men as fathers
2. Older women as mothers
3. Younger men and women as siblings
 - a. Not flattening authority
 - b. Humanizing authority

B. Widows as a Test Case for Godliness (5:3–16)

1. "Honor Widows" Defined (5:3–8)

- a. Not every bereaved woman
- b. ὄντως χήρα — one truly alone and dependent
- c. Material and spiritual dependence intertwined

2. The Key Command: *They Must Learn* (5:4)

- a. Obligation is not instinctive
- b. Godliness is *trained*, not assumed
- c. Household responsibility is learned obedience

3. The Shocking Judgment (5:8)

- a. Failure to provide is a denial of the faith
 - b. Worse than unbelief — not lesser devotion
 - 4. Enrollment and Vocation of Widows (**5:9–16**)
 - a. Spiritual devotion, not mere assistance
 - b. Anna (Luke 2:36-38) as the model
 - c. Protection of both church and household integrity
 - C. Authority, Honor, and Accountability (**5:17–25**)
 - 1. Elders as part of the household structure
 - 2. Justice without favoritism
 - 3. The weight of leadership as moral formation
 - D. Work and Authority in Daily Life (**6:1–2**)
 - 1. Slavery addressed without abstraction
 - 2. Faith lived out under imperfect structures
 - 3. Godliness does not require ideal circumstances
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III. “Let Them Learn”: The Household as the School of Godliness

- A. The Significance of learn (*μανθανέτωσαν*) - (**5:4**)
 - 1. Godliness Is Not Automatic
 - a. Even believers must be trained
 - b. Family obligation requires formation
 - 2. Learning Happens Through Practice

- a. Patience
 - b. Sacrifice
 - c. Faithfulness without applause
- B. Why the Household Comes First
- 1. Before church leadership
 - 2. Before public ministry
 - 3. Before theological sophistication
- C. The Ordinary as the Arena of Faith
- 1. Feeding parents
 - 2. Visiting the lonely
 - 3. Bearing burdens quietly
 - 4. Living peacefully (cf. **1 Timothy 2:1–2**)

The ministries of the church do not replace or reign over our duties to our households – they equip, empower, and encourage us to faithfully exercise those duties. It is why care and leadership of our households is a necessary requirement for church leadership (**1 Timothy 3:4-5**)

IV. “Worse Than an Unbeliever”: Why Family Abandonment Is So Severe (**5:8**)

- A. The Severity of Paul’s Language
- 1. Stronger than rebukes of false teachers

2. Echoes covenant-curse logic
3. Moral failure, not doctrinal error

B. Why This Sin Is Uniquely Heinous

1. It Violates Creation Order

- a. Care for parents precedes the law
- b. Recognized even among unbelievers

2. Jeremiah 2 Logic (**Jeremiah 2:9-13**)

- a. Doing what even pagans do not do
- b. Rejecting the obvious good

3. Jesus and Corban (**Mark 7:6-13**)

- a. Religious devotion used to evade family care
- b. God rejects worship that abandons parents

4. Deuteronomy's Household Curses (**Deuteronomy 28:30-34**)

- a. Judgment focused on family devastation
- b. In abandonment, we recreate judgment ourselves

C. What "Provide" Really Means

1. Financial care
2. Emotional presence
3. Honor and dignity
4. Faithful companionship in weakness

D. Necessary Pastoral Clarifications

1. Single believers are not excluded
 2. Abusive families are not sanctified
 3. Provision never means enabling harm
 4. Godliness is learned *within reasonable limits of law and safety*
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V. Conclusion: Quiet Faithfulness in a Noisy World

A. God's Vision of Maturity

1. Peaceful lives
2. Quiet dignity
3. Faithfulness without spectacle

B. The Call of 1 Timothy

1. Not to thrive
2. Not to be exceptional
3. But to be faithful

C. Final Exhortation

1. Learn godliness where God placed you
2. Honor those nearest to you
3. Trust that God works salvation through ordinary obedience