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To Those On The Edge *1 Timothy 5*

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From the beginning, the church was made up of diverse groups of people. At first it was entirely Jewish. In a short time it included proselytes and Hellenistic Jews. Later God revealed that the church was open to everyone. Men and women from different nationalities, races, and social levels melded into one spiritual family.

So after 2000 years of practicing our faith, why is it so hard for today's church to get along?

God does not expect uniformity; He expects unity!

Earlier Paul said that Christians are to act as members of God's household (3:15). Here he spells out what that means. No church leader should exercise authority in a domineering way. Instead they should treat all believers like family: with dignity & care.

Since no two people are exactly alike, we cannot treat everyone exactly alike. But we can use equal respect.

Herein lays the secret in dealing with diversity within the church.

Widows: particularly susceptible to poverty in the ancient world. No source of income; often not allowed to support themselves.

Paul was concerned with the poor in the church, and when he said they should receive "proper recognition," he was literally saying that widows could expect the church to meet their financial needs.

Not all should expect this aide. They must have no other means of support. Their Christian character and reputation must be well defined.

The phrase "washing the feet of the saints" refers to willingness to perform humble acts of service.

Some key principles that should be applied to all church groups:

Don't stereotype any group of people. Treat them as individuals with specific responsibilities & needs.

Some of our issues & suspicions come because of the age-old problem with the generation gap.

Balance the church's responsibility with the individual's responsibility.

Paul again addresses church leaders. If they are working for the church, they should receive financial support from the church.

Church leaders are not to be easy targets for attack.

Being a minister or deacon in God's church carries tremendous weight & responsibility.

Then there is the Church

The circumstances of relationships between believers will change, but the principles do not.

All are part of God's family; all have specific responsibilities; all can expect love, encouragement, & support.