

Paul's Later Letters

Fully Establishing the Churches According to Christ's Design

Paul's Later Letters

Keeping order—family style

My background

Grace Brethren Church—grandparents started

Conservative Baptist Church—same problem

Huge implications

Decline of the Western church

Global South—attrition, false systems, future institutionalization

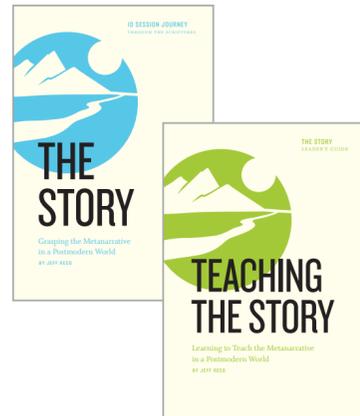
Paul's Later Letters

Issue: Keeping Order—Family Style

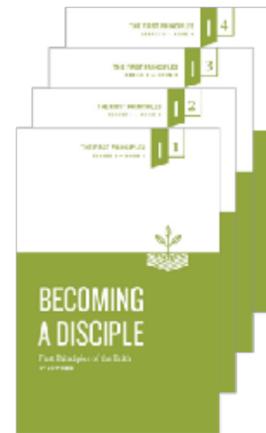
Questions:

1. Why did Paul start this section of the letter with how Timothy should relate to older men, younger men, older women and younger women? Why was this so important for Timothy to keep in mind?
2. What do we learn from the passage on dealing with the care of widows within the church family? What are the core guidelines in caring for widows in community? How do these guideline logically grow from the church social structure of a family of families?
3. What do we learn from the way Timothy dealt with the elders? How does this set a pattern for all future apostolic leaders like Timothy?
4. What kind of toll did this take on Timothy? How does this create a complimentary role of elders and key apostolic leaders like Timothy?

New Perspective on Paul



Kerygma
Early Acts
Apostles' Teaching
6 months
Paul: 3 years "night and day"



Didache
Body of Acts
Theology of Paul
1½ years

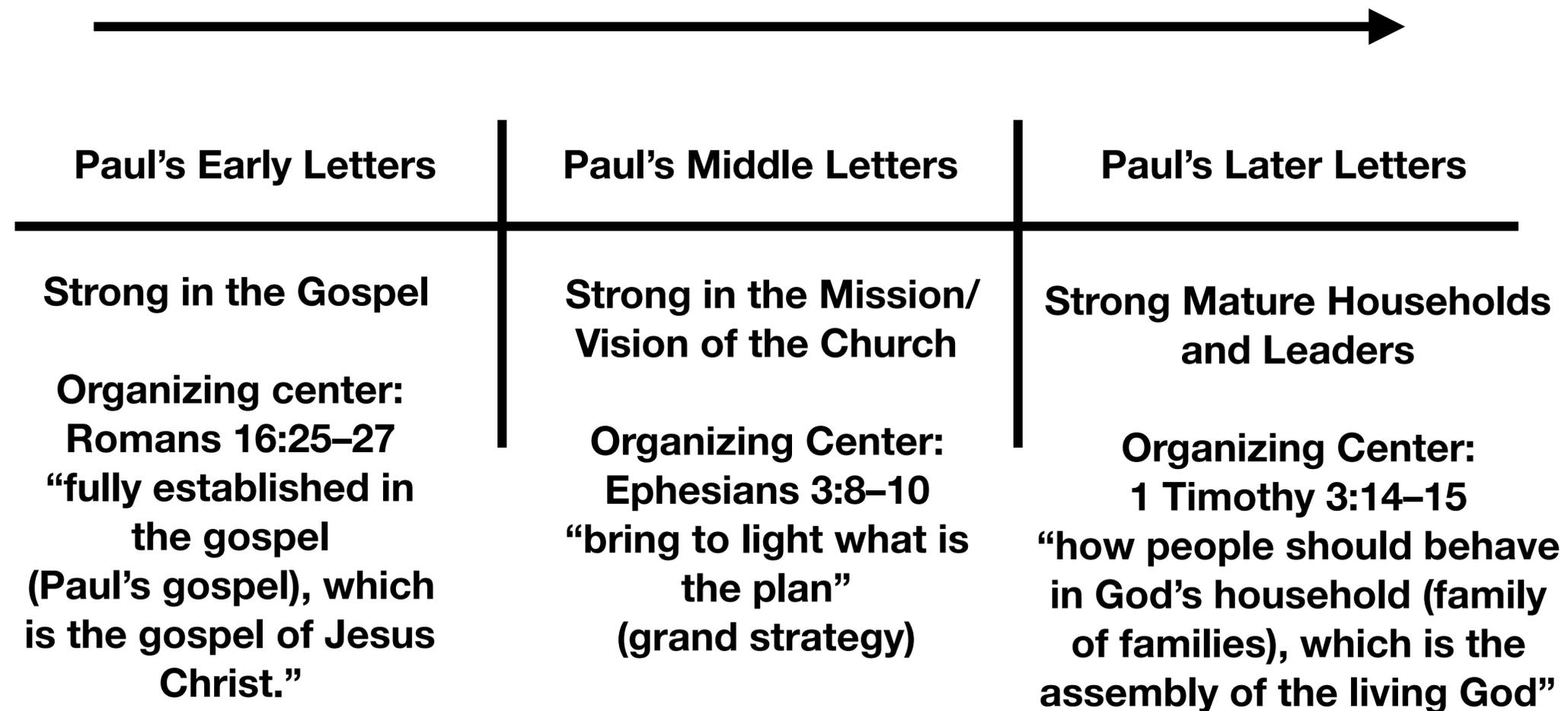


Full Kerygma
After Acts
Apostles' Gospels
1 year

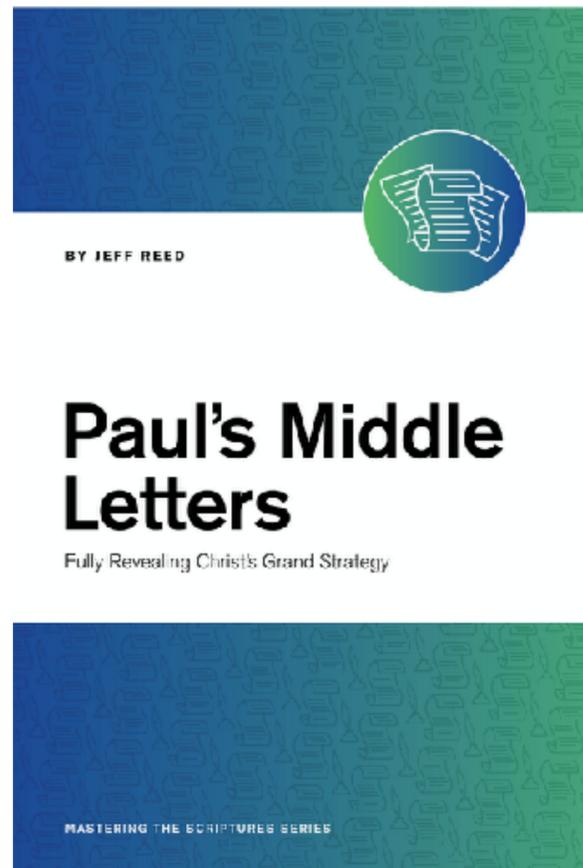


Paul's Early, Middle, and Later Letters

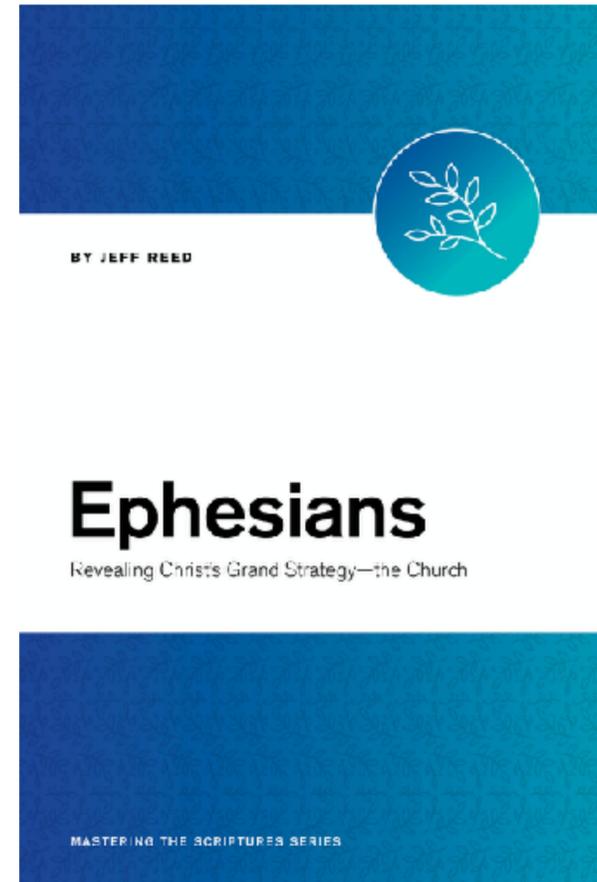
The Process of Building Strong Churches



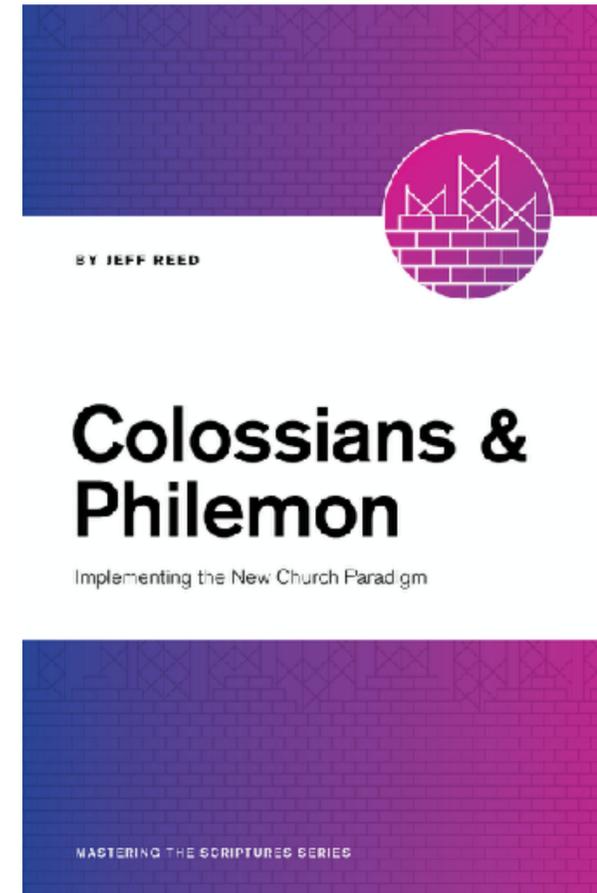
Paul's Middle Letters



Feb. 60 to March 62



Autumn 60



Autumn 61



Spring 62

Paul's Later Letters

Paul's later letters bring us to the third and final phase of Paul's process of establishing strong, mature, multiplying churches, with solid leadership and high community impact with the gospel.

1 Timothy—written to Timothy at Ephesus, Autumn of AD 62

Titus—written to Titus who was in Crete, Summer of 66

2 Timothy—written to Timothy, Spring of 67 (shortly before Paul's death)

Middle and Later Letters

1 Timothy and Titus are similar in relationship to Ephesians and Colossians.

Ephesians — framework

Colossians — put into action in a cluster of churches

1 Timothy — framework

Titus — put into action in a small network

Ephesians is sort of the framework for Christ's grand strategy. And Colossians, written in a very similar manner and content, is an example of establishing a cluster of churches in the grand strategy revealed in Ephesians.

1 Timothy is sort of the framework for fully setting in order the churches according to Christ's design as a household of God: a "family of families." (Timothy was at Ephesus fully establishing them.) And Titus is an example of establishing a small network of churches.

Paul's Later Letters



Book 1: Paul's Later Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches
According to Christ's Design

Book 2: 1 Timothy: Ordering the Churches as Households of God

Book 3: Titus: Setting in Order What Remains in the Churches

Book 4: 2 Timothy: Investing in Intergenerational Apostolic
Leadership

Paul's Later Letters



Book 1: Paul's Later Letters: Fully Establishing the Churches According to Christ's Design

Session 1: The Household: The Organizing Center of the Later Letters

Session 2: 1 Timothy: The Church as an Extended Household

Session 3: Titus: Setting in Order What Remains in the Churches

Session 4: 2 Timothy: Investing in Intergenerational Leaders

Session 5: Completing Paul's Process of Establishing Church Networks

New Perspective on Paul

Old Perspective on Paul

Paul's letters contain miscellaneous, often unrelated topics that would be useful for future believers, especially in dealing with sin, salvation, and living the Christian life. These topics are a significant part of today's ever growing systematic theologies.

New Perspective on Paul

Paul's letters form a coherent, interlocking shape, foundational for churches in any generation to fully understand Christ's grand strategy of the Church being central to His unfolding kingdom and to living in full alignment of that grand strategy.

Paul's Later Letters

Topos (common topics in one place) is a very important form of Greek rhetoric that enables you to structure an argument, including several topics, around one memorable schematic, or rubric, or literally in one place.

The organizing center (topos) of Paul's later letters is 1 Timothy 3:14–15

¹⁴ I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, ¹⁵ if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

1 Timothy



Book 2: 1 Timothy: Ordering the Churches as Households of God

Session 1: The Importance of Solid Apostolic Leadership Who Guard Sound Doctrine

Session 2: The Ordering Work of Apostolic Leaders

Session 3: The Importance of Apostolic Teaching

Session 4: Keeping Order—Family Style

Session 5: Apostolic Leaders and the Long Haul of Their Work

Solid Apostolic Leadership

In session 1 (1 Timothy 1), we looked at Paul's understanding of the importance of future solid apostolic leaders.

Obviously, Timothy and apostolic leaders after him didn't carry Paul's apostolic authority to add to the gospel and the teaching (kerygma, didache).

But on the basis of Paul's last 3 letters, it appears that Timothy and leaders after him would carry both a stewardship and authority to carry out very important apostolic (with a little a) leadership functions. This is missing in most of our Western institutional churches today and, therefore, so are networks like Acts.

In session 3 (1 Timothy 4), we looked again at Paul's conviction of the importance of apostolic teaching by these key, future apostolic leaders, again a function of Paul's apostolic gifts intended to be perpetual in future key apostolic leaders.

Solid Apostolic Leadership

In session 2 (1 Timothy 2 and 3), we began to look at the core intent of this letter to Timothy, the setting in order the households of God, the churches, as families of families.

There Paul laid out 6 aspects of what it means for a church to be set in order.

Order in Paul's Churches

Paul's Concept of a Church Set in Order

A church is set in order when ...

1. At the heart of its culture, it has a respect for governmental authority, with a view of living quiet and peaceful lives, setting the context for adorning the gospel through the quality of its community life.
2. In the context of living life in the difficulty of cultural conflicts and societal stratifications, men avoid becoming politically enraged in the controversies of the world, and women respect men's responsibility to teach the churches in a way that keeps them out of these controversies and focused on the sound teaching Paul told Timothy and Titus to completely order the churches around.

Order in Paul's Churches

Paul's Concept of a Church Set in Order

A church is set in order when ...

3. It is solidly rooted in the sound teaching Paul delivered to the churches and has recognized and trained highly qualified leaders to keep the order in the churches once established. This is the backbone of maintaining order in the churches.
4. Men and women have complimentary roles in keeping the churches solidly established in that sound teaching. Elders are well qualified in life situations and character and fully competent to teach this sound teaching, with qualified men and women to assist them.

Order in Paul's Churches

Paul's Concept of a Church Set in Order

A church is set in order when ...

5. Qualified women are taking a key role in assisting the elders in this important role of maintaining solid order around this teaching: empowering the ministry of widows in their older age, assisting younger women in building strong intergenerational households within the family of families, and helping younger widows rebuild their lives.
6. It is carefully following all of these guidelines of fully setting in order the churches so it is stable in the sound teaching, is fending off different teachings (the church is the pillar of the church), and therefore, remaining focused on the progress of the gospel. That's what all of these guidelines are primarily designed for.

Keeping Order—Family Style

In session 2 (1 Timothy 2 and 3), we began to look at the core intent of this letter to Timothy, the setting in order of the households of God, the churches, as families of families.

Now, in session 4 (1 Timothy 5:1–6:2), we will look, at a very practical level, at solving family order conflicts within the spirit of a family of families. As you will see, it is not an easy task and even took a toll on Timothy as he wandered into these family conflicts.

Keeping Order—Family Style

¹ Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, ² to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters—with absolute purity.

1 Timothy 5:1–2

These two little verses set the tone for everything that follows in this next section of the letter. This is important because, in the instructions that follow, Paul is asking Timothy to exercise some of his authority, as a young apostolic leader, even in dealing with the elders.

Keeping Order—Family Style

Timothy is not to put himself above others in any relationship. He is to set a family culture:

Treat older men as fathers.

Treat younger men as brothers.

Treat older women as mothers.

Treat younger women as sisters.

Paul will expand this in a formal way in his instructions to Titus (Titus 2)

Older men 2:2

Older women 2:3

Younger women 2:4

Younger men 2:5

Slaves 2:9

Keeping Order—Family Style

Two important points are illustrated by this comparison.

1. A topos is in action here: the topos is a “family of families,” both work with the same organizing center, which Paul revisits in Titus
2. Both styles are used: first in 1 Timothy 5 in the context of solving problems, second in Titus as a formal use of the Greek household codes.

This is very helpful as a hermeneutical principle.

Paul is working with a topos: a topic of topics (a family of families). He teaches the topos in 2 ways:

Household code: older men, older women, younger men, younger women, slaves (same as household texts: Ephesians 5:22–6:9)

Household code in action, but still there: 1 Timothy 5:1–2, dealing with widows, elders, and slaves.

From any one topos topic, like women, we can develop a complex topos-based topic statement including older women, younger women, and widows. Paul visits this several times in the 3 letters.

Keeping Order—Family Style

Now Paul turns his attention to a specific family of families matter: the care and honoring of widows.

³ Honor widows who are really widows. ⁴ If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some repayment to their parents; for this is pleasing in God's sight. ⁵ The real widow, left alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day; ⁶ but the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. ⁷ Give these commands as well, so that they may be above reproach. ⁸ And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:3–8 NRSV

Keeping Order—Family Style

The first main principle, based on the household social structure principle:

A true widow, worthy of care from the churches, must really be in need, which means there are no children, grandchildren, or possibly extended relatives to care for her; and she is genuine in her commitment to the faith.

Paul is reasoning with the principles that churches must be set in order according to Christ's design for His churches. Churches are really families of families; the church family is as real as our immediate families.

The strength of the church family is solid families, at every level. So family members need to care for their own families. This should extend to our close family members and our extended family, probably assuming they are in the churches or church network too. But we are a family of families; we have a collective strength to care for widows who are real widows in need, and who are part of our churches.

Keeping Order—Family Style

⁹ Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and has been married only once; ¹⁰ she must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way. ¹¹ But refuse to put younger widows on the list; for when their sensual desires alienate them from Christ, they want to marry, ¹² and so they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge. ¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say. ¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us. ¹⁵ For some have already turned away to follow Satan. ¹⁶ If any believing woman has relatives who are really widows, let her assist them; let the church not be burdened, so that it can assist those who are real widows.

1 Timothy 5:9–16 NRSV

Keeping Order—Family Style

Paul continues his reasoning on the principles of the organizing center of the “family of families” social structure—the topos of the three later letters. Here is an attempt at a topos-based topic statement on widows:

The churches should take care of widows who are truly alone, but with that comes a pledge from the widow to use her last stage of life in the service of good works with an open home, caring for those in the church and the community, which should have characterized her life all along. But if she is young enough to remarry she should do that, rather than seeking to be cared for by the churches.

What is Paul doing here as he gives this advice to Timothy? Look at 5:14

“So I would have...” wish, desire, want (LSJ), to be inclined, strongly prefer (TDNTA)

Keeping Order—Family Style

What is this statement? “I would have ...”

It is more than just his opinion. It is based on the social structure of Jesus’ design for His churches to all be established as families of families who will engage in good occupations and meet pressing needs in the community in a way that progresses the gospel.

But it is not a set of exact rules; it is a guide for us to establish processes in our church and culture based on this type of reasoning that fits Christ’s design for the church as a household of God.

There is room for us to reason like Paul, based on these letters and what I am calling topos-based topic statements: principle statements allowing us a solid foundation for doing theology in culture in our churches.

Keeping Order—Family Style

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; ¹⁸ for the scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves to be paid.” ¹⁹ Never accept any accusation against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest also may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality. ²² Do not ordain anyone hastily, and do not participate in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

1 Timothy 5:17–22 NRSV

Keeping Order—Family Style

Again, think what is going on here. Paul gives two lists of qualification for elders: 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9. These lists are not exactly the same. But they are based on the general topos of each church being a household of God, not exact rules.

Honor elders who are recognized and leading well in the churches, especially those who work hard at teaching; they are worthy of financial support if needed. At the same time, don't show partiality if they need to be confronted publicly in the churches, though it is not clear they are to be removed. Therefore, key apostolic leaders who at times share in the ongoing process of appointing elders, should do so very carefully.

This is huge. This is what I call a *topos-based topic statement*. What is that? It is a statement of principles clustered together, enabling us to do theology in culture. Again, this is based on a firm grasp of Christ's design for His churches as households of God—based on a household of households social structure.

Keeping Order—Family Style

What can we conclude about this topos-based topic statement on elders from this section of Paul's letter to Timothy. Here are corollary principles, embedded in the statement, in the context of what has already been stated in the letter so far:

1. Key apostolic leaders carry aspects of Paul's apostolic authority as they teach and move amongst the churches.
2. This apostolic authority was respected by elders of churches in the network; many of them were appointed by the Timothy and Titus types. And their apostolic authority was exercised, probably along with elders who were ruling well, when conflicts arose and elders needed to be confronted and disciplined in some way.
3. The Timothy and Titus types, and probably the elders recognized as senior elders ruling well, were evidently involved in recognizing new elders.
4. While these elders were responsible for managing their churches and probably clusters of churches in the network, they existed in this balance of authority with the key apostolic leaders—sort of a balance of accountability, only possible when both shared the common core principles of the household topos.

Keeping Order—Family Style

²³ No longer drink only water, but take a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

²⁴ The sins of some people are conspicuous and precede them to judgment, while the sins of others follow them there. ²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous; and even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.

1 Timothy 5:23–25 NRSV

Paul is making a couple of simple points with these verses (almost an excursus).

1. Timothy's important role as a key apostolic leader is described by Paul in this letter and again in the last chapter, when Paul again encourages Timothy to be faithful lifelong in his stewardship. But Paul is aware that this role takes a toll on such leaders, as it has on him personally.
2. Some simple advice is given to Timothy here, after instructing him in how to handle the widow and elder situations in the Ephesian churches: things are not always how they seem on the surface.

Keeping Order—Family Style

Finally he finishes this section by returning to those in the households who serve as slaves.

¹ Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed. ² Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful to them on the ground that they are members of the church; rather they must serve them all the more, since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved.

1 Timothy 6:1–2 NRSV

Why would he return to this?

He returns, because he is dealing with these two issues: widows and elders, in the context of the household codes as seen specifically in Titus 2. He again allows us to see him deal with issues within the framework of the household codes, which allows us to easily recreate the framework of those codes and use it in real life situations.

Keeping Order—Family Style

Just a comment on how Paul handles the reality of slavery.

Paul's view of householders with slaves was worked out extensively in the Colossian and Philemon letters. It would be good to go back and review that teaching at this time.

But in regards to this passage, Paul simply states that slaves must not disrespect their householders in light of the fact that they are also members of the family of God, for the sake of the progress of the gospel in the communities and cultures in which these churches exist.

Now, let's put together how Paul kept order in the Ephesian churches by a style of treating them as family—a true family of Christ, according to His design.

Keeping Order—Family Style

Keeping Order in the Family, Dealing with Family Conflicts

1. Dealing with family conflicts must take place within the culture of being a true family. That means that Timothy, in taking the lead in dealing with household issues, needs to respect family relationships as fathers, brothers, mothers, and sisters.
2. Widows issue: A true widow, worthy of care from the churches, must really be in need, which means there are no children, grandchildren, or possibly extended relatives to care for her; and she must be genuine in her commitment to the faith.
3. Widows issue continued: Churches should take care of widows who are truly alone, but with that a widow must make a pledge to use her last stage of life in the service of good works with an open home, caring for those in the church and the community, which should have characterized her life all along. But if she is young enough to remarry, she should do that, rather than seeking to be cared for by the churches.

Keeping Order—Family Style

Keeping Order in the Family Dealing with Family Conflicts

4. Elders issue: Honor elders who are recognized and leading well in the churches, especially those who work hard at teaching; they are worthy of financial support if needed. At the same time, don't show partiality if they need to be confronted publicly in the churches, though it is not clear they are to be removed. Therefore, key apostolic leaders who at times share in the ongoing process of appointing elders, should do that very carefully.

Keeping Order—Family Style

Keeping Order in the Family Dealing with Family Conflicts

5. Elders issue continued: Key apostolic leaders carry aspects of Paul's apostolic authority as they teach and move amongst the churches. This authority was respected by elders of churches in the network, many of them were appointed by the Timothy and Titus types. Their apostolic authority was exercised, probably along with elders who were ruling well, when conflicts arose and elders needed to be confronted and disciplined in some way.
6. Elders issue continued: The Timothy and Titus types, and probably the elders recognized as senior elders ruling well, were evidently involved in recognizing new elders. While these elders were responsible for managing their churches and probably clusters of churches in the network, they existed in a balance of authority with the key apostolic leaders—sort of a balance of accountability, which is only possible when both share the common core principles of the household topos.

Keeping Order—Family Style

Keeping Order in the Family—Dealing with Family Conflicts

7. The kinds of initiatives Timothy, as a key apostolic leader, had to regularly face in keeping the churches in order often took a toll on him and other leaders. He must also remember that things are not always what they might first appear.
8. The family social structure was real, and even though it puts us all equal as members of the same family, this still respects the immediate households (i.e. the churches are a family of families): this includes extended households, including a household with slaves.

Keeping Order—Family Style

Implications for Dealing with Conflicts in Our Churches Today

1. Dealing with church conflicts must take place within the culture of being a true family, which means that apostolic leaders (like Timothy) must take the lead in dealing with household issues, and they must respect family relationships as fathers, brothers, mothers, and sisters, not our Western institutional boards and positional leadership.
2. We must learn to approach church conflicts within the framework of Christ's design for churches as a household, a family of families, not from the Western church and institutions style. Paul illustrated this in how he handled the issue of caring for widows, in a culture where institutions care for widows in an ever-increasing impersonal way.
3. We must replace our Western, institutional, positional authority approach of leaders with formal authority, either denominational or leaders functioning as a corporate board over churches (or no authority but the congregations themselves) with a balanced family of families social structure, balancing key apostolic leaders and truly qualified elders.

Keeping Order—Family Style

Implications for Dealing with Conflicts in Our Churches Today

4. None of this is possible unless we take our churches through a process of returning to Christ's design for His churches functioning as a true family of families, as laid out in the household codes in 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy.
5. Unless we do this, our churches in the West will continue to decline. For without following Christ's design, the institutionalization will continue to divide, split, and destroy the true family life of churches, with no way to deal with false doctrine systems all around us.
6. Unless the new, massive church networks of the Global South, or any new church-planting movements, establish churches according to Christ's design as families of families, then conflicts internally and false teaching systems all around will cause attrition. Most networks will experience massive attrition, embrace false teaching, or stunt the growth through a future institutionalizing of the networks, which will stop spontaneous growth.

Paul's Later Letters

Issue: Keeping Order—Family Style Today

Questions:

1. Why is it critical for key apostolic leaders like Timothy to establish a family type culture, relating to the churches as family: relating to older men as fathers, younger men as mothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters?
2. How are we to treat widows in our churches? In what ways are the guidelines laid down by Paul a logical outworking of the social structure of churches as true families of families?
3. What do we learn about shaping and developing elders today from this passage? How can we follow this pattern today?
4. How can we honor both the important role of key apostolic leaders shaping the eldership and the complimentary role of elders managing the household of God?