

SOME FINAL INSTRUCTIONS: PART 1

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-15



Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to...do what is good for each other and for everyone else.”

I heard a man say, "The most important thing in learning to relate to others is personal honesty. Once you learn to fake that," he added, "everything else is easy!" Many people, unfortunately, seem to follow that philosophy. Perhaps one of the most discouraging aspects of modern-day living is not so much the moral collapse of leaders, such as we have seen many examples of recently, but the low level of ethical behavior on the part of many Christians.

I do not understand what has happened to the Christian community. Believers who go regularly to church, and profess to believe the Bible, often seem to go along with practices of the world around them with hardly any consciousness that what they are doing is unbiblical and really wrong. They lie without hesitation. They evade paying their bills. They cheat on their taxes. They ignore needy people. They fail to keep appointments. They freeload shamelessly. They lose their tempers. They grow critical and caustic. They desert their mates. If the Apostle Paul were here he would be very concerned about this. To him, the mark of true Christian faith is that it changes everything you do and say. It affects every area of your life.

A Christian may no longer act as he did before he came to Christ. This is very clear in the letters of the apostle. Every letter that he wrote ends with pointed, practical applications to daily situations of the truth that he had set out.

*The letter of First Thessalonians is no exception. The closing verses of Chapter 5, to which we now come, are wonderfully practical guidelines on how to live Christianly, in **three areas of life**.*

First, how to act toward the leaders of a church; we do not say much about this at Peninsula Bible Church, but it is part of the record of the New Testament.

Then, how to live with other believers, whether at home, at work, or wherever.

And finally, how to live toward God and respond to the situations where he puts you.¹

¹ http://preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_512-13.htm#5:12



OPEN IT

1. What is it about the human experience that demands we live in community and not in isolation? Why are so many then drawn to isolation instead of community?



EXPLORE IT

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-15

2. Who does Paul tell the Thessalonians to respect and esteem?
3. What four activities does Paul urge them to do, in verse 13?
4. According to verse 15, what should we do and not do?



GET IT

We *ask* you brothers....

Ask (erotao) means to ask for, usually with implication of an underlying question. The verb does not carry the note of an authoritative command but rather that of a friend making an urgent appeal to a friend. The term suggests that those making the request stand in a position of familiarity with those being treated.²

5. Why does Paul “ask” instead of “tell” the Thessalonians to do these various things? What can we learn from Paul when it comes to communicating with those around us?
6. While we weren’t told about the response of the Thessalonians, how do you think they responded to the last part of the letter? How would you have responded to these various commands by Paul?

² http://preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_512-13.htm#5:12

The Church and Its Leaders | 12–13

The great apostle begins with the leaders because that's where you have to begin in assessing the health of the church. "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other..." Here's how you spot a leader.

First, they work hard among you.

Second, they are "over you" in the Lord.

Third, they admonish or challenge you to spiritual growth.

It's an interesting combination. Leaders are people who come from the congregation, who work among the congregation, who stand over the congregation, challenging believers to grow in Christ. They are from, among, and over the people of God. They are part of us, they work among us, they have authority over us.

Paul lays down three commands for us to follow regarding our leaders:

- 1. Respect them | 12***
- 2. Hold them in high regard | 13b***
- 3. Live at peace with them | 13b***

There are three words or phrases here—and each one is important. The word "respect" literally means to "know" your leaders. It means to recognize them for who they are. To "regard" means to hold in the highest possible esteem. Living at peace means just what it sounds like.³

7. Why would Paul call the Thessalonians to hold these ordinary men in such high esteem?

8. How had Paul and his team proven themselves to be hardworking to the Thessalonians according to 1 Thessalonians 2:9?

9. How have you seen your church leaders labor among you?

10. In what ways can you show these leaders love as they labor for the Lord by serving you?

³ <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1996-12-01-Christian-Aerobics/>

11. How does being a peaceful people and church serve your leaders?

Having stated the responsibilities of the church to its leaders, Paul now considers the duties of the leaders to the people. He offers a four-fold job description for the leaders to follow: "And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone." For those who don't mind a dose of reality, here is the same verse from the Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles, "We encourage you, brothers, to straighten out the cantankerous, lend a hand to the spiritual runts, doctor the sickly, and get along with everybody." Frankly, I like that version a lot better.⁴

12. If church leaders are called to serve such a diverse group of people within the church, what characteristics are needed for someone to serve in church leadership?

Admonish the Idle...

*Idle (**Ataktos**) is an adjective which means out of line, out of place, disorderly, unruly, insubordinate, lazy, idle, and acting in defiance of good order. As one who is out of step and going his own way, like a soldier who breaks rank or an army that advances in disarray. It can also convey the sense of being without socially recognized constraint and thus undisciplined. In the papyri, the cognate verb is used with the meaning "to be idle."*

13. How can members within the church become idle or unruly? How should the church leadership address such people?

Encourage the Fainthearted...

*They are members who have become discouraged for some reason, perhaps because of adverse circumstances or because of their deep consciousness of their own sinfulness, causing them to despair of being able to live the Christian life. These timid, discouraged individuals needed to be encouraged, cheered up, stimulated, and helped along. They did not need to be rebuked and warned like the **idle**, but rather needed to be encouraged through the use of helpful words to continue the battle for the Lord. Let such souls, who instinctively fear the worst, learn to take courage from the gentle Lord who would not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax.⁵*

14. What causes some Christians to be fainthearted? What does it look like to encourage such people?

⁴ <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1996-12-01-Christian-Aerobics/>

⁵ Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996

Some are not well able to perform their work, nor bear up under their burdens; we should therefore support them, help their infirmities, and lift at one end of the burden, and so help to bear it. It is the grace of God, indeed, that must strengthen and support such; but we should tell them of that grace, and endeavor to minister of that grace to them.⁶

15. One group of people that can be clearly be identified are the elderly within our church body. How can we serve those who are advancing in age and struggling to bear up under their burdens?

16. Why is patience such an important aspect to ministry within the church?

In general, we must study to do what is our duty, and pleasing to God, in all circumstances, whether men do us good turns or ill turns; whatever men do to us, we must do good to others. We must always endeavor to be beneficent and instrumental to promote the welfare of others, both among ourselves (in the first place to those that are of the household of faith), and then, as we have opportunity, unto all men.⁷

17. What does it tell us about the church that Paul would have to remind the Thessalonians of their calling to repay evil with good instead of with evil when it comes to other church members?

18. How do we balance the truth of verse 15 with seeking to address the wrongs that are done against us?

19. Paul has identified some key areas that will allow a church to be healthy. Since the church is a collection of individuals that come together as one body, what can you do in the days to come to play your part in making your church healthier?

⁶ Matthew Henry Commentary found @ http://preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_514-15.htm#5:14

⁷ Matthew Henry Commentary found @ http://preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_514-15.htm#5:15