

# 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

October 2, 2022



## **INTRODUCTION**

**Who is a leader in your life that it is easy for you to appreciate (i.e. a parent, coach, teacher, pastor, boss, etc.)?**

**What about that person makes you think so highly of him or her?**

**Have you ever told that person what they mean to you? Why or why not?**

**Is it easier to tell people in your life what they're doing right or what they're doing wrong? Why?**

No matter how old you get, you will need people in your life to help you. That's how God designed things—none of us are meant to “fly solo” through life! But that's hard, too, because in relationships, we're often unsure how to express ourselves well. Think about how your friends talk to each other. It's often easier to say negative things over positives. In the moment, we might even think it's funny. Today's passage is going to challenge us in that area and help us see that we need to show appreciation and help each other—that's one way we love God and people!

## **DISCUSSION**

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-13.

**Why is it important for us to let Christian leaders know we value them?**

**What are some ways you can show and express appreciation to leaders here at FBC Summit?**

**How are you doing at honoring your spiritual leaders? Do they know how much you appreciate them? How?**

**Think about it like this: How might it impact the pastors at Summit if we all supported them in the ways we should?**

**How might it impact our student ministry?**

**Now think about it in the opposite way: How might it impact the pastors at Summit if we didn't support them in the ways we should?**

**How might that impact our student ministry?**

Each one of us has a responsibility to respond properly to the spiritual leaders God has given us. Paul explained that we should follow good leadership, receive correction, and express appreciation for godly leaders. When we have good relationships with our leaders, that flows down and it's easier for us all to be at peace with each other.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:14.

**Showing appreciation to leaders isn't the only way we show love to each other. What did Paul teach us to do in verse 14?**

**Which one of the instructions Paul gave here is hardest for you to do? Why?**

**Why is it important for you to begin growing into that responsibility now?**

**What must be true about your relationships for you to know if the people around you fit in any of these categories: idle, discouraged, and weak?**

Paul challenged the people in the church at Thessalonica to correct those who were out of step (the "idle"); uplift those who were discouraged (hold on to the "weak"); and go the long haul with those who struggled ("be patient with everyone"). To know if the people around us fit into any of these categories, we have to be in genuine, deep relationships. You can't know what people are struggling with if your relationship never goes beneath the surface.

**What is the goal of correcting those who are not following Jesus well? What does it not look like?**

**What advice would you give someone who is needing to correct someone?**

The idle might refer to church members who were able to work for a living but refused to do so (2 Thess. 3:10-11). Or it may refer to church members who weren't taking their church responsibilities seriously. In either case, they were to be confronted. When we seek to warn another believer, it needs to be with kindness and a heart for redemption.

**Why is it important that we uplift those who are discouraged and fearful?**

## **When has someone else encouraged you when you felt this way?**

The term discouraged occurs only here in the New Testament. Whenever Jesus's followers face persecution, the death of loved ones, or some other life crisis, they need the comfort others can bring.

## **Which do you think is more difficult—to help someone else who is in a time of “weakness” or to allow someone else to help you in your weakness? Why?**

There are two different kinds of weakness—physical and spiritual. You can be weak from illness or fatigue, or you can be weak because you're struggling with temptations. In both cases, we shouldn't ignore or desert each other. We should try to help each other. When we are willing to step into another person's struggle and weakness, we love them in the way Jesus tells us to.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:15.

## **Why does God want us to seek the best for people who act in hurtful ways toward us? Practically, what does that look like? What does it not look like?**

### **Who benefits when you seek the best for people who don't deserve it?**

### **Is it possible to always pursue what is good for one another and for all? How?**

These exhortations aren't just for leaders. They're for all believers! We all bear the responsibility of caring for each other together. The truth is members of a church usually outnumber leaders by a lot. One of the privileges of being a church member is being able to contribute to the health and growth of your faith family. We can keep others from evil and promote a life-giving culture as we seek the well-being of others.

## **GOING DEEPER**

 READ ACTS 2:42-47.

### **What did these relationships between early believers look like?**

### **What should living in a community of faith here at Summit Students look like?**

 READ GALATIANS 6:1-2.

**How does carrying one another's burdens lead to fulfilling the law of Christ (love God and love people)?**

### ***APPLICATION***

**Based on this passage, how can we best show our leaders that we appreciate them?**

**What examples of authentic love have you observed here at FBC Summit?  
How can we do better?**

**What are some obstacles that keep us from a deeper sense of real community in our group?**

### ***PRAYER***

Praise God for His wisdom, as He designed you to live in community. Ask Him to help your group grow closer. Pray that God would show you how to better serve Him and others.

### ***LOOKING AHEAD***

*Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage as we continue our study of 1 Thessalonians:*

**October 9, 2022 --- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22**

### ***COMMENTARY***

**1 Thessalonians 5:12.** Paul turned to some practical matters of church life. The first involves the relationship between the congregation or community and its church leaders. Paul first called the congregation to give respect to those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord. Honor is due to church leaders, whether they are paid staff or officers who give their time and energy (elders, deacons). Spiritual leadership is difficult and weighted with responsibility. These leaders are engaged in hard work. One of their "thankless" duties is to admonish. This deals with pointing out faults or mistakes, errors in individuals or the community. Those who perform this task take on a difficult responsibility, and they are to be respected and honored.

There are implications for the leaders as well. They are to work hard. It is good work, and they are to get their energy from God. Part of the job description of the church leader is to “stand before” or be over others in the Lord. This is not a dictatorship, but a way of lovingly and authoritatively teaching the Word of God to the people. Leaders are also to point out wrongs, sins, and failures in the lives of their people and congregation. This is not a favorite task, but it is essential to the health of believers and the church.

**5:13.** Not only are we to honor our leaders; we are to think of them in a special, affectionate way. We are to love them. The basis for this love is their work. Church leaders are performing a good work for Christ and His people. This deserves our highest respect and love. Paul then turned our attention toward the person sitting next to us, or across the aisle, and commanded us to live in peace with each other. This is a maintenance program for a healthy church: keep the peace. To live in peace means to go as far as possible to live in harmony with others, or “as far as it depends on you” (Rom. 12:18). Many people who would not rob a bank or tell a blatant lie will sin against this clear command. They speak or act in ways that are divisive. People who act this way hurt not only themselves and other persons, but they also hurt the church. People outside the church notice such things and stay away.

**5:14.** Paul next launched into some short, staccato instructions and commands for Christian living. He focused on three types of people in the Thessalonian church who presented different concerns for him. He spoke about the idle, the timid, and the weak. The idle were to be warned. There were those in the Thessalonian church who were so certain of the imminent return of Christ that they became lazy in their daily living. If Christ is coming back soon, they may have reasoned, what is the point of the daily grind? In their neglect they became careless in their responsibilities, spent too much time chatting over the back fence, and contributed little to the general welfare of the church.

The timid were to be encouraged. These were people who had become discouraged, perhaps depressed. They may have felt this way because of difficult circumstances, or because they despaired of living up to the high standards of the Christian faith. These people needed to be helped, not warned. They needed to hear, “You can do it.”

The weak were to be helped. These were the spiritually weak in Paul’s time, and they are still found in every church. Perhaps they lack knowledge or experience; it could be that they struggle with certain sins which continually defeat them; they may lack courage or find it difficult to trust God. They are weak in the faith and need to be helped along the way. We all identify with this group of people at some time or other. In our weakness and inability to conquer sin, we find that Christ helped us by the sacrifice of his life. Can we who have been so blessed do any less for others in their time of need?

Everyone should be dealt with in patience. Love is what helps us be patient with everyone. Love is patient. It does not seek its own way. Because of our selfish tendencies, we need patience from others, even as we need to be patient. Perhaps that is why God can be so patient with us. He recognizes that our mistakes, our bungling efforts, our one step forward and three steps back are valuable learning exercises in growing in grace and character.

**5:15.** Paul was concerned not only with relationships within the church, but relationships outside the church. He gave commands for behavior to each other and to everyone else. Getting even, exacting our own sense of “justice,” is a strong human tendency.

Jesus was different. He contradicted just about everything we naturally do. He often began His moral lessons with “you have heard” and then called for a change by following up with “but I tell you” (Matt. 5:21-30; 33-37; 38-42; 43-47). He brought a new way to live. He is the new way.

Only as we abide in Christ and entrust our grievances, hardships, and the wrongs we suffer to him can we live with this command. It is not natural, but it is possible. It marks a distinctly Christian approach to life. Paul detailed this approach by quoting Proverbs 25:21-22 in the Book of Romans when he called us to live in peace, to not take revenge. He told us, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink” (Rom. 12:20), then added “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21). And so Paul told the Thessalonians to be kind to each other and to everyone else. This means everyone both inside and outside the church.

