

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 (ESV)

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

Theme Statement: Holy fellowship calls God's people to honor, encourage, help, and patiently care for one another.

1. We ask you
 - a. Respect those who labor among you
 - i. Respect from Greek “oide,” to acknowledge, know, recognize, respect/honor
 - ii. 1 Tim. 3 gives a good description of leadership qualifications
 - b. who are over you in the Lord
 - i. Leaders are both among and over us
 - ii. Christ is the true shepherd of the sheep
 - iii. The leaders are what are called “under-shepherds”
 1. 1 Peter 5 gives the behavioral charge to elders
 2. It also demonstrates that the Chief Shepherd ministers through the undershepherds
 3. 1 Corinthians 4:1 describes ministers as “under-rowers”
 - a. Underrowers were not the prominent people
 - b. They steered the ship at the direction of the captain
 - c. and who admonish you
 - i. admonish = lit. give instruction
 - ii. the implication is not so much to simply inform but to provide gentle instruction and correction
 - d. Esteem them very highly in love
 - i. Verb here is a passive/middle, granting them leadership and the commensurate respect
 - ii. Very highly = lit. “beyond all measure”
 1. “Me genoito” in my Romans 6 sermon meaning “inconceivable”

2. This is kind of the same concept
 - a. exceedingly, abundantly beyond what we can ask or imagine (exact same word as in Eph. 3:20)
 - b. It's literally an overextension of love and honor
- iii. What that means
 1. Our leaders are due an immense measure of respect because of their labor for the Lord in our midst
 2. Hebrews 13:17
 3. 1 Tim 5:17-22 is a good passage on how to treat elders – double honor, but also to slowly accept a charge against them
 4. It is a weighty thing that they endure
 - a. Not only in how they care for your souls, but the great risk to their own
 - i. About a quarter of senior pastors in the US *seriously* considered quitting the ministry in 2025, per a December study
 - ii. Half of pastors don't make it through their first five years – you all know at least one (raise hand) – and many of those leave the church altogether
 - iii. This doesn't consider bi-vocational elders who are in the workforce *and* ministry
 - iv. Main citations are isolation, conflict, family strain
 - v. Ministry is rough, dirty work among sheep that often kick and struggle against the ones caring for them
 - vi. It doesn't have to be that way
 - b. Teachers/preachers are held to a higher standard (James 3:1)
- iv. What that ***doesn't*** mean
 1. "Touch not God's anointed"
 2. Does not mean they are infallible
 3. There are people who would assume authority in a Christian community for their own power, money, fame, or other destructive ends – and often they play the "touch not God's anointed" card
 4. These are not the people we are talking about – we call those wolves

- 5. Leaders are held to the standards in 1 Tim 3, in addition to the basic standards of Christian life
 - v. because of their work
 - e. Be at peace among yourselves
 - i. Unity of the body is important!
 - ii. Christ prayed for this in John 17
 - iii. The verb is literally to live peacefully
 - iv. The idea is that people joyfully submit to Christ's leadership, and the leadership joyfully leads and serves (Heb. 13:17)
 - v. We see similar language toward the end of Eph. 5.
- 2. We urge you
 - a. Admonish the idle
 - i. Principle
 - 1. Same word used for leaders to admonish the flock in v. 12
 - 2. We see here that while certain people are charged to be over the body, the body is also expected to "police itself" with instruction and exhortation on the way
 - ii. Who are the "idle?"
 - 1. This word appears three times in the NT, all in the letters to the Thessalonians
 - 2. Septuagint likens to it as a city without walls
 - 3. In contemporary writings it reflects:
 - a. a military unit acting out of order/without leadership
 - b. lacking rhythm, law, structural order
 - c. unstructured/undisciplined
 - d. Either someone is willingly acting out of order, or nobody knows what to do because there's no leadership/communication
 - 4. Given "sober" earlier in Ch. 5, we may assume that this is a lack of focus, discipline, restraint
 - iii. This instruction is consistent with the Christian message
 - 1. Confronting sin in one's own life
 - 2. Confronting witnessed or known sin in someone else's life
 - 3. Encouraging one another to gather and pursue good
 - 4. We must address our own idleness before confronting someone else's?
 - b. Encourage the fainthearted (comfort the discouraged)

- i. there were a lot of these in Thessalonica bc they thought their loved ones would miss the resurrection
 - ii. Oligopsychous, literally something like "small-souled" - only time it appears in the NT
 - iii. Encourage is paramytheomai - appears in 1 Thess 2:12 and 5:14
 - iv. Derivative twice in John 11, comforting Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus
 - v. specific connection with death or tragic events
 - vi. With the threat of death for acknowledging another king than Caesar (Acts 17:1-9), this was likely a deeply felt connection
- c. Help the weak
 - i. Greek asthenes, meaning without physical vigor
 - ii. Can mean weak, sick, infirmed
 - iii. Multiple applications
 - 1. Tend to the sick
 - a. Visit
 - b. Pray with/for
 - c. Encourage
 - d. Nurse to health if qualified/able
 - 2. Help the weak
 - a. Physically – assist as needed
 - b. Spiritually – pray for, encourage, support!
- d. Be patient with them all
 - i. This is not a condemnation campaign
 - ii. This is also not an overnight operation
 - iii. Planting, watering analogy is apt
- e. See that no one repays evil for evil
 - i. See to it – to observe properly, to take heed, to fixate upon
 - ii. This is not eye-for-an-eye
 - iii. The Christian life is one that turns the other cheek
 - iv. God and the justice system will have their way
 - v. We cannot be at peace (v.13) and repay evil for evil simultaneously
- f. but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone
 - i. lit. pursue the good to/for each other and to/for all
 - ii. Doing/saying things for someone's own good
 - iii. This can be temporal things
 - 1. To Christians
 - a. Galatians 6:10

- b. Ephesians 4:32
 - 2. To the world
 - a. Jeremiah 29:7
 - b. Romans 12:20
- iv. It can and should certainly be spiritual things as well
 - 1. Hebrews 10:24-25
 - 2. Hebrews 3:13

APPLYING THE WORD

1. In what ways can I observe holy fellowship through recognizing the work of the church leaders among us and contributing to their joy?
2. In what ways can I bring comfort, encouragement, and instruction to my fellow believer?
3. In what ways can I seek the good of those around me, both in the church and in the world?
4. In what areas do I need to look to Christ for help, as we wait for his return?