
The Thessalonian Letters

Instructions for Deepening Spiritual Growth

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28



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Appreciate the leaders of the church (5:12)

- “**appreciate**” (literally, “know”) the appointed leaders of their church.
- Who “**diligently labor**” (*kopiaō*) ~ intense labor accompanied by struggle, fatigue, and weariness (1:3; 2:9; 3:5).
- “**have charge over you**” (*proistēmi*) ~ commissioned with authority and having the responsibility of governing, leading, or managing the affairs of the local church.
- “**give you instruction**” (*noutheteō*) ~ literally, “to place into the mind.” Its normal meaning is to admonish, warn, or gently reprove.

A minister is to put his people in mind of the truth; to warn them of danger; to exhort them to perform their duty; to admonish them if they go astray.

Esteem church leaders very highly in love (5:13)

- “**esteem**” (*hēgeomai*) ~ an interesting play on words. It is often used to identify someone as a leader, governor, or chief ~ literally someone who “leads the way.” A secondary meaning is to give something a leading place in your thoughts or affections.
- “**very highly**” (*huperekperissōs*) ~ an intensified form of *perissōs* that by itself means “exceedingly beyond measure.”
- “**love**” (*agapē*) ~ demonstrates their deep regard for their leaders.
- Respect not only for their position, but also because of their “**work**.”
- “**live in peace with one another**” ~ apparently there was evidence of an independent spirit which caused them to fall short of Paul’s high standard for respecting their leaders. Paul will say more about this later.

Proper behavior for the brethren (5:14)

- “We **urge** you, brethren” (*parakaleō*) ~ Paul is encouraging and exhorting.
- “**admonish**” (*noutheteō*) ~ caution or warn a particular group of people → the “**unruly**” (*ataktos*) ~ literally, “out of rank.” Describes someone who is insubordinate or willfully strays from an authorized structure.
- “**encourage**” (*paramutheomai*) ~ to come alongside with gentle words of consolation, comfort, or cheer → the “**fainthearted**” ~ literally, of “little spirit” ~ those who have come to the point of losing heart.
- “**help**” ~ to cling to or hold firmly → the “**weak**” (*asthenēs*) ~ those who have no strength, either physically, mentally, emotionally, morally, or spiritually.
- “**patient**” (*makrothumeō*) ~ long-suffering; enduring offenses and injuries.

Rejoice in pursuing good (5:15-16)

- “**See that**” (*horaō*) ~ watch out or see to it (imperative).
- “**repay another with evil for evil**” ~ retaliation is forbidden; *long-suffering* is the antidote to retaliation (see 5:14).
- “**But**” (*alla*) ~ strong contrast; “**seek after**” (*diōkō*) ~ actively pursue **good** (*agathos*) ~ the contrasting term for “**evil**” (*kakos*).
- “**rejoice**” (*chairō*) ~ be glad, joyful, or full of joy. This kind of joy is not a feeling, but a decision. Feelings cannot be commanded.
- This is a joy that is not conditioned by outward circumstances. It is not natural joy, but something produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

God's will in Christ Jesus (5:17-18)

- “**pray**” (*proseuchomai*) ~ the common word for laying one’s concerns, wishes, and desires before God.
- “**without ceasing**” (*adialeiptōs*) ~ uninterrupted or by unvarying custom (compare 1:3). Be in fellowship with God, whether formally or informally.
- Prayer is the continual expression of our dependence on God, and it is what allows believers to rejoice always, no matter the circumstances.
- “**give thanks**” (*eucharisteō*) ~ the common word for expressing gratitude.
- Respond with thanksgiving “**in**” all situations (not necessarily “**for**” all).
- “**God’s will**” (*thelēma*) ~ rejoice, pray, and give thanks.
- “**in Christ Jesus**” ~ it is only in union with Him that such a life is possible.

Rightly handling prophetic utterances (5:19-22)

- “Do not **quench** the Spirit” (*sbennumi*) ~ to extinguish, hinder, or thwart.
- “do not **despise** prophetic utterances” (*exoutheneō*) ~ to set at naught or consider worthless. “**prophetic utterances**” (*prophēteia*) ~ includes predictions as well as instruction given through the special gift of the Spirit for the early church age (Acts 13:1; 15:32; 21:10; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10, 28; 14:1-40; Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; 2 Pet 1:20-21).
- “**examine**” (*dokimazō*) ~ determine whether the message is consistent with the will and Word of God (Phil 1:9-10).
- “**hold fast**” (*katechō*) ~ keep a firm grasp for the purpose of safekeeping. “**abstain from**” (*apechō*) ~ anything found to be unsound, wrong, wicked, or worthless.

Paul's closing prayer (5:23)

- “Now may” marks Paul’s final prayer for the Thessalonians.
- “God of peace” ~ in 5:13 Paul commanded them to “live in peace with one another,” and here he identified the source of all true peace.
- “sanctify” (*hagiazō*) ~ to declare or make something “holy” (*hagios*). Only God can make something holy.
- “entirely” (*holotelēs*) ~ “to the end” or having reached its goal.
“complete” (*holoklēros*) ~ having received an assigned portion or inheritance.
“without blame” (*amemptōs*) ~ blameless at the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul focused on the completion of the believers’ sanctification in glory at the coming of the Lord (3:13).

Final reassurance and requests (5:24-26)

- God who initially “**called**” (*kaleō*) them will be faithful to carry them through to the end (Phil 1:6).
- God is “**faithful**” (*pistos*) ~ He is completely trustworthy and He will “**bring it to pass**” (*poieō*) ~ the common word for doing something.
- “**Brethren, pray for us**” ~ Paul sincerely appreciated others’ prayers.
- “**Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss**” ~ “**brethren**” clearly characterizes the relationship between Christians as brothers and sisters. A “**holy**” or fraternal kiss was an appropriate expression of greeting, similar to how we might greet a family member today with a loving embrace. It is intended as an expression of true Christian love of the brethren (*philadelphia*, 4:9).

Closing words (5:27-28)

- “**adjure**” (*enorkizō*) ~ to put someone under oath, obtaining their solemn promise that they will do what you ask. “**the Lord**” is the witness for their promise. Paul wants the Thessalonians to consider the public reading of this letter to be a solemn obligation.
- Paul ends just as he began (1:1), with “**grace**” (*charis*) ~ the unmerited favor of God.
- Because of our sinful condition, there is nothing that any person can do to earn the favor of a holy God. He sets His love upon individuals based solely on His own sovereign choice and on what Jesus Christ has accomplished on our behalf.