

ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY

5. Ways of Relating That Are Essential to Community

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

1 Thessalonians 5:12–15 We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

Paul addresses the way individuals within a community of believers are to respect to the leaders within their community and the way they're to relate to each other.

This morning we're going to zero in on the way they're to relate to others. About 2 years ago I spent about 30 minutes walking through verse 12 and the first part of verse 13. You can get those notes and the media from the first study in a series titled "ecclesiology 101". What I will say about those verse is that we don't want to miss the fact that verses 12-13a were not directed to the leaders — they were directed to those not in leadership. The big idea is that respect for those in leadership is essential to community.

Like I said, this morning we're going to zero in on the last half of verse 13 through verse 15.

As we look at these things, we begin to understand that continual — complete dependence on — and yielding to — the Holy Spirit is ESSENTIAL for community.

THIS IS SO HUGE — There **is no Christian life** apart from the Holy Spirit. The Christian life **IS** *Life in the Spirit*. If we learned anything during 2020 it's the fact that Biblical information processed through an inadequate or constricted relationship with God does not lead to Biblical discipleship. We need to get to know the Holy Spirit, discover our deep dependence upon the Holy Spirit — open our heart to the influence Holy Spirit — get to know His leading and His promptings — depend upon His power and His enabling — and respond in obedience.

¹²We ask you, brothers.... ¹³.... **Be at peace among yourselves.**

LITERALLY — *Live in peace*

Be at peace — **among yourselves.**

INTERESTING: This is **not** a **suggestion** — **but a command** for this to be their lifestyle.

REMEMBER — The Kingdom of God — of which every community is part — is to be the living expression of the heart and ways of the King.

*Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and **peace** and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

The one who rules over the Kingdom of God is the “Prince of peace.”

Paul is giving them a command that is rooted in the teaching of the King, Himself!

Mark 9:50 (ESV) ⁵⁰Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves (salt was a preservative), and be at peace with one another.”

2020 was the moment for the church to be salty — it was the opportunity to put the heart of our King on display. It was the moment when the church could be a cathartic / cleansing and healing agent in culture.

When people looked at the way Christians behaved in the events of 2020 did they see the heart of Jesus? Sadly — not so much!

¹⁴ **And we urge you, brothers,**

BROTHERS — This word — and all the meaning and weight it carries — should be settling into the deepest part of who we are and how we process our life in Christ.

Check this out — Paul uses the word *brothers* some **sixty** times in his writings. **Twenty Seven** of those sixty times are in his two letters to these believers in Thessalonica. I believe it's because the church in Thessalonica was so YOUNG. He was there for **just three Sabbaths** — and then he was driven out of the city. So, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul is reinforcing the reality of their nature and relationship to one another.

AGAIN — The Holy Spirit was incredibly deliberate here

He wanted these young believers — this young community of believers to understand **the very NATURE** of this community in the midst of an environment hostile to the Gospel.

HERE'S THE PICTURE — Paul and those who served with him were calling that community of believers to come along side of them so they could counsel them and plead with them to relate to one another in several essential ways.

¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish (warn) the idle (unruly), encourage the fainthearted (KJV – feebleminded), help the weak,

CRUCIAL OBSERVATION — It **doesn't** say: We exhort you pastors. It is an exhortation to the community of believers at large. This was a corporate responsibility. It echoes Paul's words to the Colossians

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

The role of the pastor is to teach the Word of God — feed the sheep the truth of Scripture — but that is not the end. It was — and still is — the responsibility of each believer to foster a way of receiving the Word — incorporate disciplines and habits that enable the Word of God to have a home in the deepest parts of who they are.

admonish (warn) the idle (unruly)

This is not just talking about those who are **hard** to lead. It was a word commonly used in the military in describing a soldier **out of step** — or an army **moving in disarray**. Then it was **further applied** to those who **quit** the ranks and **did not** perform their duty.

Paul says this to the community at large — that **they** were to WARN those who were OUT OF STEP with the truth of Scripture / out of sync with the heart of Jesus — DOING THEIR OWN THING

THIS IS SO CRUCIAL — It **does not** necessarily mean that someone is doing a BAD thing — but they are doing THEIR OWN thing.

In verse 12 and the first part of verse 13 we learn that that within a community of believers there are men — who *IN THE LORD* are *PRO-IS-TEMI* — place in front of and over to lead. They are **responsible to the Lord** for the **vision** and **mission** of that local community of believers.

Listen — If the devil can't undermine a community of believers through blatant sin — he will come at them by way of people who are just wanting to do their own thing — and they getting other people to march in step with them. The unruly person will say to himself — or to others: *I think we should be doing this or that or the other; I don't know why we have to do this! I don't know why we have to do this this way.* The next thing you know — otherwise well fed — contented — growing sheep — are wondering: *WHY can't so and so can't do such and such? Why aren't we doing this or doing it this way?*

It is the **responsibility** of the **community** of believers to WARN those that are marching out of step. IF brothers and sisters don't WARN that brother or sister who is not at his or her post; don't warn that brother or sister who is marching out of step with the vision and mission that Jesus has for that community of believers, that community will end up like an inefficient — undisciplined army in battle.

It doesn't say to kick them out. It says WARN them. Warn them because they are destroying the peace that they are supposed to live in.

encourage the fainthearted

KJV – Feeble-minded

fainthearted is a **compound** Greek word.

oligos — puny in extent, degree, number, duration or value
psuche = soul, mind

SMALL SOUL!

It's a reference to those who **really struggle** with **believing** that God loves them — or **struggle to believe** that God can use them. But the truth is that God has ***begun a good work in them*** — and the community of believers is to **COMFORT THEM** — help them to see God so they can see their true identity that is anchored in Him.

What are you to do with the person who seems to **quickly** and **regularly** says:
I guess God doesn't love me — I'm never going to mature — I'll never be used?
What are you to do with the person whose emotional bandwidth is small? Are we to say — **GET LOST ya big quitter!**

Paul says that **the community** of believers is to **WARN** the one marching out step — but they are to **ENCOURAGE** those who are *small-souled*.

Encourage is a BEAUTIFUL word

Come along side with your mouth and speak kindly to that small soul to build it up and encourage it.

This is not **just** for me or Travis or those who lead in areas of ministry! this is for YOU — the community of believers at large — to **individually** come along side — with your mouth — and speak kind words that will encourage that small-souled individual.

My wife Valerie is such an amazing example of this! When we were doing high school ministry there was this one young lady we ministered to who, when she graduated, went to USC. Valerie would get phone calls at Midnight or 1:00am

from her. And they'd be 2-hour phone calls. And I would just listen to my wife just come alongside and speak encouraging words.

When that phone would ring, and I'd pick it up, and I'd hear that young girl's voice, I'd just want to go 'click' — but not my wife. There was another young lady. She's married now — walking with Jesus. But when she was in high school and early in college — she had some really huge emotional setbacks — huge! One summer she came to our house unexpectedly when we were about to go on summer vacation. She was on medication. And we took her on vacation with us. And we had to watch her constantly for fear that she might try to take her life.

She was so sweet — but small-souled. And my wife would just take walks with her on the beach speak encouraging words to her — *"You are so special to us — we all love so much."* She was also artistic. Valerie would always just encourage her, — *"That's so beautiful — When did you do that?"* That's what Paul means.

Look at this range of persons and behaviors

Unruly/out of step — small-souled — **and the weak**. In every community of believers there will be that same range! That's **just** who **we are**.

The word **weak** describes a **state** of **limited capacity** to **be** something or **do** something. It's used literally of physical weakness. (we find this word most in the Gospels)

But it's also used **figuratively** of weakness in the spiritual arena. There are those who are weak in their understanding of the doctrine of the Christian life; And they have not yet been set free by the truth. **Whatever it may be** — Paul says to the community of believers at large — **HELP** them.

HELP = "**Lay hold of the weak**" with the idea of **supporting** them. It carries the idea of supporting another person **by keeping** yourself directly in contact with the weak person so you can prop him up. This connects so beautifully with what we learned about "bearing one another's burden" — how it requires intimacy / proximity; getting close enough to that brother or sister so their burden can slide on to you.

Listen to this — this is so beautiful

QUOTE: Hiebert — *Let the strong put their arms around the weak and hold them up. They need to be assured that they are not forgotten or despised because of their helplessness.*

Whatever it may be — Paul says to the community of believers at large — to **HELP** them! "**Lay hold of the weak**" with the idea of **supporting** them. That demands a little extra effort — a phone call — an invitation to lunch — a quiet talk about their needs.

This is addressed to us all. We are **all** to **watch out** for **one another** like this.

MOVIE — The Professor and the Madman — Mel Gibson played the man who led the compiling of the Oxford English Dictionary — He befriended a man who was a madman — he would go to the asylum to be with the madman — "I'm here to see my friend!" He held him and showered him with love

I love how the Lord has directed us here at our church Metro to have that time between worship and the Word to have coffee — sow seeds of intimacy. Early in the life of Metro there was a specific Monday night study when a particular sister asked me, "*How can I pray for you?*" When I thanked her for her prayer she said, "*Well, I could tell. I looked at you. I could tell you needed prayer.*" And I said: "*Well, that's one thing about me — You won't have to look far to know whether or not I need prayer. Just look at my face. You'll know when you need to fall on your face and start praying.*"

But some of us aren't so easy to read. But isn't it great how just having coffee/tea — or standing in line to get it provides an opportunity to get to know a brother or sister. And over time you begin to discern: *This is my brother who is weak in this area in his life — This is my small-souled brother/sister* — and I just want to love on them today — I just want to call them.

By the way — Sometimes spiritual weakness is readily or easily observable. One of the symptoms of spiritual weakness is legalism. If you believe that relationship with God is transactional in nature — you live legalistically. You measure your relationship with God on how much you obey, or how much you disobey. And you begin to make rules for — what's good, and what's bad. And you build your confidence in the Lord based on legalistic performance.

CLOSING

¹⁴.... **be patient with them all.**

¹⁵ **See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.**

PATIENT — Makrothumeo

makros = long, distant, far off, large
thumos = temper, passion

The picture of this word is that of a person who **takes a long time** before fuming and breaking into flames towards those who fail!

¹⁴.... **be patient with them all.**

be patient with the Unruly / out of step /

be patient with the small-souled

be patient with the weak

¹⁵**See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.**

When we think of the kinds of people that make up a community of believers; when we think of the responsibility of the community of believers to LIVE in relationship to their leaders and to one another — **we discover** that community consists of brothers and sisters who are all works in progress. All of us need to see that essential community All of us need to see that essential community boils down to our relationship with our King

John 14:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.