

1 Thessalonians 5: 12-18 – How to treat each other

Main point: Treat each other well, because God is taking care of you.



Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: Scholars think this may have been the earliest written book in the New Testament, possibly around 50 A.D. It's a letter that Paul wrote to the church at Thessaloniki, which is still a city in Greece. Back then it was part of the Roman Empire and was a large port town that Paul visited on his second missionary journey. Paul ends his entire letter by giving the group some instructions on how to treat each other.

Focus of the study:

¹² Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. ¹³ Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work.

And live peacefully with each other. ¹⁴ Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are idle. Encourage the fainthearted. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always do good to each other and to all people. ¹⁶ Rejoice always. ¹⁷ Pray without ceasing. ¹⁸ Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

Questions:

1. *What groups is Paul talking to in this passage? What kinds of members and roles make up a church or fellowship?*
 - a. Leaders/pastors/ministers
 - b. "Regular" members
 - c. And don't forget God!Paul addresses all three of these in turn.
2. *What words does Paul use to describe how we should treat our leaders?*
 - a. v. 12-13: "honor," "respect," "wholehearted love"
 - b. *What do those words mean?*
 - i. Treat them respectfully, listening, not griping at them all the time, give them attention; genuinely praise and encourage them
3. *Are all leaders perfect? (Of course not...) Unfortunately, what is it easy to do when we don't like how a leader leads?*
 - a. It's easy to grumble and complain about leaders when they don't do things fast enough or the way we want them to.
4. *When we're less than thrilled with our leaders, what could we do instead of complaining?*
 - a. Give them some credit for trying 😊
 - b. Consider that they also have problems and may be trying to do their best.
 - c. Consider if/how we can suggest ideas and help rather than simply point out problems.
5. *Paul then turns to "each other," the "brothers and sisters." In verses 13-15, what kinds of attitude and behavior does Paul encourage among a group?*
 - a. v. 13: Live peacefully with each other. *What does this involve?*

- i. Don't hold grudges; care for each other
 - b. v. 14: Warn the idle. *I wonder what that means?*
 - i. Encourage, try to teach. Those who are not working or not busy enough may get into trouble or become frustrated; help them out.
 - c. Encourage the fainthearted. *How do you feel when you feel faint?*
 - i. weak, tired, discouraged in heart and spirit
 - ii. Encourage: "in + courage": lift someone up, give them courage, hope, faith, belief
 - d. Take tender care of those who are weak. *What other kinds of weakness are there besides in spirit?*
 - i. physical, mental ... We can listen, encourage, provide knowledge and give tangible care, like food and clothing
 - e. Be patient with everyone. *Who is "everyone"? Just people that are like you or agree with you or who do things the way you do things?*
 - i. No – everyone! Even people who are really annoying 😊
 - f. v. 15: Don't pay back evil for evil: *meaning?*
 - i. Don't hold a grudge, don't look for revenge when you are wronged
 - g. Always do good to each other and to everyone: *How?*
 - ii. Offer comfort, assurance, peace, help.
6. v. 16-18: Then Paul turns to God. *What instructions does Paul give to the people in this church to strengthen their relationship with God?*
- a. Rejoice always
 - b. Pray without ceasing
 - c. Give thanks in all circumstances
7. *Let's look at these one at a time. First: **Rejoice always.** How?*
- a. Realize our limited perspective. We can only see a situation from the perspective of our human vision, on this earthly level. *But where is God and what is he always doing?*
 - i. Above all, sovereign and good; always watching out for us; always sustaining us.
8. **Pray without ceasing.** *How?*
- a. *What happens when you do something over and over and over?*
 - i. You get good at it! It becomes second nature.
 - b. *Why can we approach God all the time?*
 - i. Because God is with us every moment. We pray in dependence and with confidence that he is listening and working on our behalf, every day, every hour, every minute.
9. **Give thanks in all circumstances.** *How?*
- a. Trust God's presence and story. We are not alone; God knows what we need and will provide, even when it's hard.
10. *Who is taking care of you every minute of every day?* God of the universe.
- a. *So how do we get the strength to care for others?*
 - i. Rejoice, pray, give thanks! These practices mold our character to rely on God, to seek God's direction and strength, and to care for others as God cares for us.

- Ask for prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

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