

March 9, 2025

God's Good News Story–The Church Alive & Growing

I Thessalonians 5:11-28

Encouraging Words to the Church Family

God's Good News Story - "The Church Alive & Growing" is our ongoing multi-year sermon series where we are working our way chronologically, historically, and missionally through the New Testament. Our goals are to have a clear understanding of what the Bible says about the 1st Century church and its' growth and the principles and lessons we can learn from them to keep the Church Alive & Growing in the 21st Century. We are in week 6, the last week of our mini-series in the book of 1st Thessalonians in which Paul, Silas & Timothy address concerns by the church in Thessalonica by encouraging them to live right, trust in God and place their hope in the sure and certain 2nd coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Key Theme: Encourage & Comfort one another in the midst of uncertain times.

Our Goal: To Walk in a Manner Worthy of God & to Become More & More Like Jesus.

As we have made our way through this 1st letter of Paul to the Church at Thessalonica, I have mentioned, and you have probably picked up on the fact that Paul had a deep love and connection to these believers. One of his often used terms is that of <80> ἀδελφός *adelphos* or 'brother'. Paul as well as other NT writers uses this term generally to describe both men and women who are believers in the Church. Paul uses this term around 60 times in the various letters (13) he wrote, and in the two letters to the Thessalonians he uses it 27 times.

Paul saw the Church as a family, a family of believers who work, serve, love and worship together.

In the closing portion (5:11-28) of this 1st letter Paul encourages, implores and urges the 1st Century family of believers in the Church at Thessalonica to follow these vital guidelines in order to have a healthy Church family. If we follow these same guidelines, we, as the 21st Century Church can '***build one another up***' in the faith as stated in verse 11.

The following outline headings are adapted from Warren Wiersbe's 'Bible Exposition Commentary' & Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary by Mark Howell.

1. FAMILY LEADERSHIP

1 Thessalonians 5:11-13...¹¹ Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you also are doing. ¹² But we ask you, brothers and sisters, to recognize those who diligently labor among you and are in leadership over you in the Lord, and give you instruction, ¹³ and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

Paul is showing a direct link here between '***encouragement***' and growth or '***building one another up***'. It is nice to encourage just for sake of it, but the real purpose or the desired result is that the person being encouraged will be '***built up***' or show growth and maturity. I think we can easily associate this growth or building up with Paul's previous desire in ***1 Thessalonians 1:10... that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*** & then again in 4:1

1 Thessalonians 4:1... *Finally, then, brothers & sisters, we request and implore/encourage you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to WALK AND PLEASE GOD (just as you actually do walk), that you do this MORE & MORE.*

.....
Now back to today's passage

1 Thessalonians 5:11-13...¹¹ *Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you also are doing.* ¹² *But we ask you, brothers and sisters, to recognize those who diligently labor among you and are in leadership over you in the Lord, and give you instruction,* ¹³ *and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.*

So, Paul dives into a series of guidelines that will build up the Family of God, the Church.

1st Paul addresses Family Leadership:

Every group, team, business, country, family & church needs leadership, without it they will not be able to be all that they need to be or accomplish all that they may be capable of. Leadership is God's design; it is even one of the Key Spiritual Gifts listed in **Romans 12:8**. This word for leadership is used 8 times in the NT. <4291b>

προϊστημι *proistemi* to put before, to set over, to rule.

Usage: engage(2), have charge over(1), leads(1), manage(1), managers(1), manages(1), rule(1).

Paul has stated before the need for the church to honor and appreciate and respect their leaders. Though it may sound self-serving for Pastor/Leaders like myself to make

note of this, it is explicitly and directly taught and commanded in more than one passage. It is important for the church family to recognize/respect God's appointed leader. Paul gives three reasons why the church should recognize/respect those leaders:

1. They "***diligently labor***" (vs12a),
2. They are "***in leadership over you***" (vs 12b) also means to '*stand before, be in charge over, manage*' (there seems to be an implicit understanding that there is also an accountability to God for the leader themselves as well); and
3. **Thirdly** these leaders are charged and responsible to "***give instruction***".

This passage seems to serve a two-fold purpose:

1. A directive to the Church on how to respond to their God-called leaders, and
2. A description of how a God-called leader should live and serve God and His church.

The Church Family should Recognize/Honor and Love.

The Leader should Labor, Give Leadership & Impart Instruction.

It is a sound loving '*partnership*' that brings health to the church and Glory to God.

2. FAMILY PARTNERSHIP (aka Intervention)

1 Thessalonians 5:14,15... ¹⁴ *We urge you, brothers and sisters, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.* ¹⁵ *See that no one repays another with evil for evil but always seek what is good for one another and for all people.*

Most of us have come to the realization that there are times when family/church/business groups need a little wise, loving yet firm ‘Intervention’. When these times come it takes a partnership between the ones needing help and the one giving the help. These ‘interventions’ may not be pleasant, but they are necessary.

Paul list’s Four (4) steps to a biblical church family intervention.

1. Admonish the unruly - The ‘*healthy partner*’ is to admonish, exhort, give positive instruction (with the intent to correct and restore to right relationship) the ‘*unhealthy, unruly partner*’. The term for unruly is often used to describe a soldier who would not keep rank but insisted on marching to his own way. While individual freedom is appropriate at times, this case seems to point to someone who is headstrong, obstinate and self-focused. The Church Family needs to have a set of basic rules and guidelines for behavior if the family is going to thrive and bring glory to God.

2. Encourage the fainthearted - The ‘*healthy partner*’ is to encourage, comfort, console with helpful loving words the “*unhealthy fainthearted partner*”. Sometimes being a Christian is hard, sadly some

‘fainthearted’ people are timid and easily discouraged and they just bail out and run. A healthy family will reach out and speak encouraging words to build up, strengthen and restore the ‘fainthearted one’ to a vigorous, healthy walk.

3. Help the Weak - The ‘*healthy partner*’ is to help, **hold** fast, be devoted to the ‘unhealthy weak partner’. This guideline is connected to but slightly different to the previous one. The fainthearted are timid, easily discouraged both emotionally and spiritually. The ‘weak’ mentioned here seems to refer to those who are weak in their faith, immature, lacking spiritual insight, wisdom. There may also be a physical or mental component to this as well. For various reasons some Christians do not grow sound in their faith and are immature and frail, (it may be from their own lack of will, or a lack of good instruction by leaders, or a lack of mental or physical ability... they need ‘*healthy, caring and helpful partners*’ to come alongside them to strengthen them in their time of weakness.

4. Be Patient with everyone - The ‘*healthy partner*’ is to be patient no matter the circumstance and no matter who it is they are dealing with. Patience is one of the Fruit of the Spirit, found in Paul’s earlier letter to the Galatians (5:22). This last guideline is focused on everyone. There is no excuse for not seeking to be patient. Patience is a product of genuine love.

Paul then moves into the next section, which is on Family Worship. A patient loving healthy Church Family will naturally and instinctively WORSHIP.

3. FAMILY WORSHIP

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24...¹⁶ *Rejoice always,* ¹⁷*pray without ceasing,* ¹⁸*in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁹*Do not quench the Spirit,* ²⁰*do not utterly reject prophecies,* ²¹*but examine everything; hold firmly to that which is good,* ²²*abstain from every form of evil.* ²³*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ²⁴*Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will do it.*

I wish we had more time to devote to all these verses, but the summary of this section reveals Paul's guidelines for Healthy Family Worship.

Elements for Church Family Worship Include:

- Rejoicing
- Prayer
- Thanksgiving

These are to be incorporated '*Always*', '*Without Ceasing*', & in '*Everything*'.

On top of that it is the very '*Will of God*' that you worship in this manner.

Additional Worship Guidelines are:

- Don't quench the Spirit
- Evaluate prophecies wisely and fairly
- Hold on to good
- Abstain from evil

The result of this type of Healthy Family Worship is:

- The God of Peace will sanctify you
- Your soul, spirit & body will be complete (healthy & mature).
- You will be without blame when Jesus returns.

Verse 24 gives us the assurance that God is faithful to accomplish these things if we follow His will.

²⁴ *Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will do it.*

4. FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY

1 Thessalonians 5:25-28...²⁵ *Brothers and sisters, pray for us.* ²⁶*Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss.* ²⁷*I put you under oath by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.* ²⁸*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

Finally, Paul closes with some words reminding us that a healthy family church will:

- Pray
- Fellowship with Sweetness
- Will share these words of encouragement to all the family
- Experience the grace of the Lord Jesus.

Wow! This 1st Letter to the Thessalonians is so powerful, encouraging, comforting yet challenging.

So let me ask you... As part of God's Family (the Church) will you decide to:

Walk in a Manner Worthy of God & Become More and More Like Jesus! Invitation