

A Primer on Relationships in the Church
1 Thessalonians 5:12-14

Introduction: After the Christmas break, its time to return to our study of 1 Thessalonians. We have a couple of more weeks in this study. The last time we looked at 1 Thessalonians, Paul was addressing issues related to the return of Christ. Now, Paul turns his attention to the very practical issue of relationships in the church. Paul cares deeply about how relationships are handled in the church. What he offers the church in Thessalonica and us in this passage is essentially a primer on relationships. This is how relationship ought to be done. May our study cause us to excel still more in cultivating this kind of culture here at Faith.

Opening Discussion: Steve said that every family, organization, workplace, etc. has its own culture relationally; there are accepted ways of treating each other. How would you describe the culture of your birth family? Was it one where you said whatever you thought whenever you wanted or was it more of a keep your thoughts to yourself kind of family culture?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14

1. Who does Paul have in mind when he says that we should “appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord” (v. 12)?
2. What does it mean to “appreciate” such people and to “esteem them very highly in love” (12-13a)? Practically, what does it look like to do this?
3. What does this passage say about how we are to treat one another (13b-14)?
4. What is the differences between someone who is unruly (NIV, “idle”), fainthearted (NIV, “timid”) and weak (v. 14)?

5. What might happen if our love is not tailor-made and we apply the wrong approach to a person?
6. As you think about this idea of tailor-making our approach, how do you think we are doing as a small group? What can we do to improve?
7. In addition to tailor-making our love, we are to be “patient with all men” (v. 14b). What does it mean to be patient? How are you doing in living this out in your life?
8. The final command that Paul gives in this section is that we are to see to it that no one repays evil for evil, but rather we are to seek after that which is good for one another (v. 15). How do you think it would affect how you live your life if you regularly asked the question, “What is the good that I can do in this situation for the other person?”
9. If we as a church (or small group) increasingly lived out what Paul instructs in these verses, what do you imagine our church (or group) would be like? What would be the effect?