

e-concepts

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Practical Apostolic Instruction from 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

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In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 Paul gives the Thessalonians *requests, things he asks them to do*. These are not simply suggestions since they come from an apostle. But rather than list them as commands Paul gives them as things he request they do if they want to be close to the heart of God.

(1). The first of Paul's requests is his longest and it has to do with leadership. Paul describes their leaders as; *those who work* (literally; *labor hard*) *among you*, [those who] *lead* (or *administrate*) *you in the Lord*, [those who] *warn or admonish you*. We should notice that Paul describes leadership, not with positions such as deacons or elders, but with functions, like working, leading, and admonishing. Also notice the work of leadership is not just "being followed" but leading in the direction of the lordship of Christ and it includes warning them and/or admonishing those who are led. The response to these leaders should be: to *know* them and to *esteem them very highly in love*.

(2). The second request is a common one, literally; *have peace among yourselves*.

(3). Third, he gives them an exhortation for discipline; *admonish the unruly*, or it could be translated: *we beseech you brethren to warn the disorderly* (or *lazy*). Notice the continual emphasis in Paul's instructions about correcting teaching and behavior which is wrong, not just teaching what is right.

(4). Then he gives the balance to that; *encourage the discouraged*. The word is a combination of the words for *small, little* or *few*, and *soul*. Literally, though awkwardly, *small souled*. *Depressed* might be a good translation.

(5). Five is *help* (or *support* or *seek after*) *the weak*.

(6). Where the previous three were targeted at specific kinds of people, six pertains to every believer, *be patient with all*. Patience is a virtue regardless of the object of the patience, because God is patience (Psalm 86:15).

(7). Not paying back evil for evil is because revenge is God's job, not our job (Romans 12:19).

(8). Always seeking good for everyone. Unlike patience, goodness is an attribute of God. Notice however, what is good for people is not necessarily what they think is good for them.

(9). *Always rejoice*. It's like; *I'm commanding you to keep on rejoicing*. So joy is not something you find but something you do. And it is not some place you arrive at but something you keep on doing. Joy and happiness are not distinguished in the Bible, but both are a state of mind and spirit, not physical states of being. Physical or circumstantial joy/happiness is only pursuable not attainable in this world.

(10). *Pray without ceasing* is another continual command. And like #(9) it is a mental/spiritual condition, not a physical activity. Paul is not suggesting they be on their knees all day but he is urging them to be in communion with God all day.

(11). *The giving of thanks* is another word often used for prayer. Here Paul uses it to describe the proper ongoing attitude of the believer. It is in contrast to pride, the satanic response which separates value from God.

Thankfulness to God in all things, gives all value to God.

(12). The command *Do not quench the Spirit*, is fascinating in that it reveals that such a thing is possible. The Holy Spirit given by God is quenchable. That means I can resist what He does. For example, the Holy Spirit convicts me of sin (John 16:8), but that does not mean I will necessarily respond to that conviction by confessing my sin (1 John 1:9).

(13). *Do not despise prophetic utterances* for us means obey the New Testament. But for them before the New Testament cannon was complete it was listening for *prophetic utterances* from God given by tongues or prophecy.

(14). The procedure for evaluating those *prophetic utterances* to see if they are from God, is outlined in 1 Corinthians 14:6-33. Here Paul tells them to *examine*, or *prove* things. It is the word from which English gets the word "document". The idea was clarified by Thomas Aquinas, who told the Church: revelation must come from God, but it must be understood by reason (not a direct quote).

(15). The point of the last half of verse 21 is to hold fast to those prophesies which you have examined and determined to be good. We don't have to determine the goodness of prophesies because we have a complete cannon of Scripture. So we just have to hold fast to them.

(16). Verse 22, *abstain from every form of evil*, could be a continuation of verse 21, but more likely it is a separate principle to be understood as pertaining to all evil, not just evil *prophetic utterances*. It is an exhortation to avoid, not just what is actually evil, but what a casual observer would consider to be evil. However, the word *wickedness*, or *evil* is biblical evil, not social evil. Society might define good things as evil (such as intolerance for homosexuality, abortion, Islam, and women clergy).