Grace Fellowship Church Fort Worth, TX (11 Jan 1987) Rick Griffith

Christ Chapel Fort Worth, TX (8 Nov 1987) Message 10 of 10

NIV 25 Minutes

**Anatomy of a Healthy Church**

***1 Thessalonians 5:12-15***

**Topic:** Church

**Subject:** The elements of healthy church life

**Complement:** involve respect for leadership and individualized ministry to church members

**Purpose:** The listeners will respect its spiritual leaders and minister to church members according to their individual needs

**Meditation:**

**Reading:**

**Song:**

# Introduction

### Interest: What do you think is more important for a church to be healthy? Respect for the leaders or respect for the followers?

#### "Let me see," I can hear some of you saying, "Respecting leaders is more important because otherwise the people won't have any direction."

#### But others are thinking, "Sure, it's important to respect leaders, but how can a leader function with people who don't respect one another?"

### Need: Well, let's suppose you are taking a jet from D/FW to El Paso. You get on the plane and find out you have a window seat on the right side of the plane. The plane takes off and over that right wing you can soon see Fort Worth.

#### From your vantage point which is more important on a plane: that right wing in front of you or the left wing on the other side of the plane? (If one had to fall off which would you prefer?)

#### A related question: Which is most important in order to live: air or water?

#### Or which does a car need most to run well: an engine or a chassis?

### Obviously, the answer is "d. all of the above!" And the reason is simple: both wings, air **and** water, and an engine **and** a chassis are vital for planes, bodies, and cars to function.

### Subject: But just as there are indispensables for a plane, a car and a healthy body, so are there ingredients vital to the proper functioning of the church of God.

### Preview & Text: The Apostle Paul expounds on two necessary characteristics of a well-functioning church in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15.

(Let's take a look at the first quality in the first two verses of this section where we see that…)

# I. The healthy church *respects its spiritual leaders* (5:12-13).

**[A properly functioning church recognizes that God has placed leaders over it.]**

## Church members should respect their leaders (5:12). Reading from the NIV…

### The word for "respect" here literally means "to know."

#### This is the rationale for the KJV translation, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you…"

#### Although it normally means "to know," here it carries more the idea of respecting and appreciating.

### So who are these church leaders?

#### The verse says that they do three things:

##### They work hard among the saints.

##### They are over the flock in the Lord.

##### They admonish the people of God.

#### In light of this description and the use of the plural it seems that Paul probably has the elders of the church in view, not the least of which would be the pastor.

### Why do we have to address this issue?

#### You may think your pastor set me up to this but don't even entertain the thought!

#### I'll be honest with you. Having been in the pastorate myself I know how important respect for leadership is.

#### I'm also preaching on this subject because this is the kind of thing a pastor has a difficult time preaching. He can't say, "Hey, y'all, the Bible says respect me!"

#### But I feel this message is especially important to our day and age. As you know, the media hasn't been too kind with preachers lately. It used to be that people put their pastor up on a pedestal. Now some churches put their pastor up on a dart board!

(But some might ask, "Why should the church leaders get such appreciative treatment?" Is it because of their position, academic degrees, experience or wisdom? No. Paul addresses the real reason spiritual leaders are worthy of respect in the next verse…)

## The church should think highly of their leaders because of their *work before God* (5:13a).

### Ever consider how many responsibilities we place on our pastors which you can't find in verses 12-13? A few years ago a Christian magazine printed an advertisement for the position of pastor in a local church:

“Wanted: Pastor for a growing church—a real challenge for the right man. Must know about all problems of birth, life, sickness and death. Must know how to operate and fix copier. Able to sound learned at times but most of the time sounds like good-ole-Joe. Must pretend he likes hearing women talk. Applicant's wife must be both stunning and plain, never discouraged. Applicants will undergo evaluation by a committee of 100 to determine sanity.”

### I share this ad not to get you to feel sorry for your pastor. But I thought I'd "tongue-in-cheek" remind you of the responsibilities which people can often require of their pastor. Hey, let's be realistic!

(The verse ends with an interesting statement where it says…)

## "Live in peace with each other" (5:13b).

### It seems that this command is not just to the followers, but to the leaders as well.

### A pastor and congregation are commanded by the Word to build bridges between one another, not walls. And peace will be the result of this "bridge building." Are you building bridges or walls?

(The first part of our passage for this morning has focused on the congregation's relationship to its leaders. Verses 12-13 have reminded us that spiritual leaders deserve respect from church members.

As Paul continues discussing perspectives for a healthy church, he now changes his focus from discussing relationships to leaders to addressing relationships within the congregation at large. Verses 14-15 tell us the second characteristic of a healthy church…)

# II. The healthy church *ministers to its members according to their individual needs* (5:14-15).

**[A good church won't treat everyone the same but in a tailor-designed way.]**

(You know how important it is to have the right size of gloves? Well, last Christmas my wife Susan received the most remarkable gloves. The package said, "One size fits all," but I wouldn't believe it. I've only met one man in my whole life who had hands larger than mine and he was 6' 6". But I tried them on and… sure enough, a wonderful fit!

That might be wonderful for gloves but when it comes to people, one size **doesn't** fit all. People come in all shapes, sizes, temperaments, interests, pet-peeves, weaknesses, strengths, habits, and you-name-it. That means each must be treated differently, according to his individual needs. Romans 8:28 is not the "cure-all" for everyone undergoing trials.

Paul recognized this because in verses 14-15 he mentions five various types of people and how to respond to each one. Again he addresses the entire church because he begins with the word "brothers" [except this second time rather than just **asking** them as he did in verse 12 he **urges** them--to do five things]. First, he says that…)

## The idle should be warned to get back to work (5:14a).

### Many Christians think that someone else is going to do the work in the church.

### Do you have a conviction that something should be done in this church that's not being done?

#### Establish an evangelism network to bring in more people or begin an outreach to some of the street kids?

#### Do some refurbishing here on the building?

#### Get a visitation program going during the week?

### My friend, if you have the vision for it **you're** probably the best one for the job!

### I think the best way to find out whether you are one of these idle who need to be warned is to ask how differently the church would function if you didn't come. Would there be any holes in our ministries? I hope so!

(There's a second group of persons in the church who need help…)

## The timid should be encouraged to press on in the Christian life (5:14b).

### These people are called the "fainthearted" by some translations.

### What are these folks like?

#### They tend to get more easily discouraged and despondent than most.

#### They're prone to depression and withdrawal.

### I guess these people need to be whipped back into shape, right?

#### No—they need a different treatment than the idle. They need encouragement.

#### They need someone to come alongside them to help, to console.

### Who fits this description in our church body? What will you do to offer the much needed word of encouragement?

(A third group of people are mentioned in the next phrase where it says that…)

## The weak should be supported by fellow believers (5:14c).

### Now who are the weak? I think we all are! It just depends upon when you're talking about. This past week I've been both the weak and the encourager of the weak.

#### I had an opportunity to encourage one who was weak, her husband having just had his leg amputated last Tuesday.

#### And in the past several weeks I've announced with pride to some of you how my wife Susan was pregnant. Two days ago on Friday, for some reason, the Lord saw fit to take that little one home in a miscarriage. Pastor Ted knew that Susan and I were weak and he kept in contact during the process of not knowing.

### The weak are the kind of folks we need to hold onto--in fact, that's what the word "support" means--"to hold onto something, to cleave to a person" (Morris).

(So we've discussed the idle, the timid, and the weak. Obviously that doesn't cover all the different types of struggling people in our body. Maybe that's why Paul included everyone in the fourth group…)

## Everyone requires patience in the church (5:14d).

### The strategy here is to be longsuffering--the opposite of being short-tempered, which happens to be the easier response.

### So what is patience, anyway?

#### One noted, "Patience is letting your motor idle when you feel like stripping the gears."

#### My wife offered a good definition once when we were in the car:

"Patience is something you admire greatly

in the driver behind you

but not in the one ahead of you.”

#### I think patience is just this: giving God time to work in the lives of others.

### Patience is especially needed for those of us here with family problems.

#### With your son, daughter, son-in-law or daughter-in-law, maybe you're mom, dad, or in-laws who you consider outlaws! Perhaps you're at your rope's end…

#### You may **be**, but God has a longer rope. Let go of yours and take his!

(Sometimes lack of patience in the church can reach that of some Thessalonians who wanted to take things into their own hands. That's why in his fifth admonition Paul wrote that…)

## Those seeking revenge should be encouraged to seek the other's good (5:15).

### Retaliation is never an option for the Christian, but it doesn't end there. We must also take the offensive by doing good for the one who tempts us to revenge: It says, "…but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else."

### How do you do good instead of seek revenge?

#### First of all, as Romans 12:18 said, …so far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all men." Do all within your power to be at peace with the person.

##### This may mean asking forgiveness—or granting it. Either action can't be done without humility.

##### But once the root offense has been handled you can move on to do good as this verse admonishes.

#### Do good rather than revenge by committing yourself not to say one evil word about that person who has deeply hurt you.

#### Send some flowers or other token of appreciation for the one whom you can't stand--it'll blow 'em away!

#### I'd suggest inviting the individual over for dinner!

##### This is what Romans 12 means when it says,

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals upon his head."

##### You see, people don't know how to handle love from those who aren't **supposed** to love them!

(So let’s go back to where we started when I promised that we would discuss elements of healthy church life.)

# Conclusion

### I began this morning by asking which you thought was more important: respect for leaders or respect for followers—mutual respect and individualized ministry in the body. Well, obviously it's not "either or" but "both and."

### Today's passage has shown us that ***healthy church life involves respect for leadership and individualized ministry to church members*** (MI).

### Let's bow together for prayer…

### Let me encourage you to make an application in one of these two areas: Respect for leadership or individualized ministry to another person tailored to his or her needs.

#### In the respect for leadership area:

##### Have you properly supported your spiritual leaders?

##### Do you trust that God will work through your leadership even if their ideas may be different than your own?

##### What do you say about the pastor and elders and what messages of encouragement is left unsaid?

##### Why not offer a word of encouragement to your pastor or one of the elders?

#### In regard to the second area, how can you have an individualized ministry in the church with a certain person?

##### Whom do you know that fits the description of…

###### Idle needing to be redirected into a useful ministry

###### Timid needing to be encouraged

###### Weak needing support

###### Needing patience from you?

###### What should you do to help this individual? (Phone? Visit? Send card? Pray?)

##### Do you need to substitute the temptation for revenge with some positive action? What kind of action? How? When?

### Prayerfully consider what the Lord would have you do in response to His word.

### Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

# Questions

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Text

# Possible Illustrations

### Text

# Possible Applications

### Text

**Title**

***Passage***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*:

# I.

# II.

# III.

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest:

### Need:

### Subject:

### Background:

### Preview:

### Text:

(Transition into MPI here.)

# I.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into MPII here.)

# II.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into MPIII here.)

# III.

[Restate MP here.]

(Transition into the MI here.)

# Conclusion

### (MI).

### Main Points

### Exhortation/Application



**Rick Griffith**

1986

Message of 10

**Title**

***Passage***

# Introduction

Subject with a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ blank answer in hidden text

# I. MP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

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## SP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

# II. MP has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

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# Conclusion

### Main Idea has a blank for the key word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ answer (verses).

### Application question

**Thought Questions**

1. Read the passage aloud. Contrast:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **Contrast** |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
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1. Text-based question

Text

Text

Text

Text

1. Application to your own Christian experience

Text

Text

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