



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

## 1 & 2 Thessalonians

### Lesson 8: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

I can't believe we are already drawing to the end of 1 Thessalonians! I am thankful that you are still with us and praying that you are gleaning as much from this beautiful letter as I am. I hope that each week, as you read through these letters in their entirety, that you are seeing more connections and are having more "ah-ha" moments.

#### Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

If you marked your petition verbs a few weeks ago you will see two in close proximity here, "we request" in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 and "we urge you" in 1 Thessalonians 5:14. It seems as if Paul is addressing two different groups of people with a separate set of admonitions. The first group addressed in this section is the Thessalonian congregation as a whole.

**According to 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, what two requests does Paul make that the congregation do toward specific men?**

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**What are the three characteristics of those men?**

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**Who do these characteristics describe?**

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**According to 1 Thessalonians 5:13, why are we to esteem these men?**

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These characteristics describe elders, ministers, and teachers. The congregation was instructed to "appreciate" and "esteem" these men. Appreciate (OIDA) means to know and esteem (HEGEOMAI) means to think about or consider what they have done. This doesn't mean that once a year we should have a church leader appreciation banquet and shower them with gifts, though that would be a wonderful recognition of their hard work. This is referring to forming relationships with these men and being constantly thankful of the sacrifices they make to guide our souls.

**Think back to the struggles the Thessalonian congregation was experiencing; how could forming these close relationships with the leaders in their congregation help them in this area?**

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So many times, we consider elders to be those who simply sit behind closed doors and make decisions for the congregation; however, these men are charged with helping to guide our spiritual walks. We may think of our minister as the man who “only works one day a week,” but he is charged with assisting the elders and studying to teach and train the congregation. These men have a much broader role than we ascribe to them and do so much that no one will ever see. Not only do they deserve our respect and honor for the work they do, but by forming close relationships with them our lives are blessed!

**How can forming close relationships with the leaders in your congregation help you in your spiritual walk?**

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**What is the final command that Paul gives the congregation in 1 Thessalonians 5:13?**

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Paul understands that if the Thessalonians are going to stand firm in the midst of their society, they are going to have to not only depend on their spiritually mature leaders, but their fellow Christians. Rifts and division within the church cause incredible damage to Christ’s image in the community and personal damage to all involved. Paul wants them to put aside all silly grievances and get along with one another so that they can strive to help one another live the lives God intended.

**In what ways do rifts and division affect the church?**

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**What is one thing you can do this week to strive to live at peace with your brothers and sisters in Christ?**

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**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14-22**

Notice the word “admonish” here in 1 Thessalonians 5:14; the Greek word is NOUTHETEO and is also used in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 where it is translated “give you instruction.” Because of this connection and the fact that he starts with a separate petition verb, I believe that Paul is specifically addressing the spiritual leaders in this section that he was previously commanding the congregation to get to know and appreciate. This also makes sense when you consider that Paul’s purpose for writing this letter was to strengthen the congregation in Thessalonica; it would have been a logical progression to address those responsible for the spiritual direction of their congregation.

**What were the leaders of the congregation instructed to do according to 1 Thessalonians 5:14-22?**

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First these men were instructed to “admonish the unruly.” The word for unruly here



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has the connotation of someone who is undisciplined. We will see this word in 2 Thessalonians referring to those who were unwilling to work for a living. The leaders were not to simply turn a blind eye to these situations, they were to teach them to live a better, more disciplined life.

The leaders were then told to “encourage the fainthearted” and “help the weak.” Remember this was a fairly new congregation, most of its members were infants, spiritually speaking. They were confronted daily with former friends and family that were skeptical and even hostile to their beliefs. It would help tremendously to have spiritual mentors that constantly encouraged them and lifted them up.

Next Paul instructs these men to be “patient.” There are two Greek words that are often translated patient; the more common is HUPOMONE, which means steadfastness, endurance, or to patiently wait for something. This word, MAKROTHYMEO, is different; it refers to having patience with a person even when provoked. This is an incredibly important characteristic for all in the congregation, but especially for its leaders.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:15, Paul wants them to be active peacemakers. They are to make sure that those in their congregation are not acting in a vindictive manner or being confrontational. The leaders are to continually strive for peace. This means sometimes they have to step into confrontations that are not their own in order to resolve the situations, an incredibly difficult and nerve-wracking task.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 states that these men should be joyfully giving thanks always and be in continual prayer. Bad attitudes are contagious, especially when they come from the top. The leaders must strive to maintain the proper mindset so that it trickles down to their entire congregation. Not only this, but they should serve as an example by being in continual prayer.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 seems to refer to those with the spiritual gift of prophecy. The leaders were not to keep those with the gift of prophecy from teaching, but they were responsible for examining their teachings. They were to hold fast to those who were truly teaching God’s message and distance themselves from those who were not. While we no longer have the spiritual gift of prophecy alive in our congregations, the same principle would apply to teachers. The leaders of our congregation are to examine carefully what is being taught and are responsible for making sure it is in line with God’s word.

**How would having a leadership that exhibits these qualities make it easier for the Christians in Thessalonica to remain faithful?**

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**At which of these admonitions do you feel your congregation’s leaders excel?**

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**Which of these teachings do you feel most impacts the church as a whole?**

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**How can you make it easier for your church leaders to fulfill these obligations?**

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**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28**

What a beautiful closing to a heartfelt letter! Throughout the turmoil and stress of persecution, Paul reminds them that God is a God of peace and He is faithful. Jesus will return, and God will be true to His promises.

**How would this final reminder have eased the minds of the Christians in Thessalonica?**

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**What are some ways we can keep God's faithfulness in the forefront of our mind on a daily basis?**

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As Christians, it is a guarantee that we will encounter trails and hardships. There will be people who malign us for what we believe. This letter is a wonderful reminder that we are not alone. Not only do we have a Christian family around the globe that cares deeply for us, even if they do not know our name, we have a God who is faithful to all His promises. Let us keep striving

to live a life pleasing to Him no matter our circumstances.