

## **1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 — What Is God's Will For Life In The Church? - Part 1**

**May 12, 2024**

Good morning, CrossWinds! Today, we begin the last section of 1 Thessalonians. We won't finish the book, but we will come close.

Next week will be a little break in our rhythm. Pastor Jeremy will teach. I will be here but since I will be gone all week at a continuing education class in Wisconsin, I won't have adequate time to prepare. Each year, I gather with a few folks from my doctoral program to spend a week with a scholar in their specialty area. We will spend a week with Dr. Averbeck from Trinity Seminary this year. His specialty is the proper use of the Old Testament law in the New Testament church. It will be a week of studying, but it is a privilege to study with a scholar.

The following week, we will be return to 1 Thessalonians. If everything goes according to plan, we will finish the book. After that, we will be in a five- or six-week series called Core for most of June. We will look at the core values of CrossWinds. I taught that series a decade ago before we launched the Spencer campus. The series' purpose was to be sure we knew what we were replicating in another campus before we opened it. Since most of the Spirit Lake and Spencer campus was not here ten years ago, Pastor Jordan and I thought it would be good to take that series off the shelf, dust it off, tune it up, and share it again. It will help everyone be clear about the distinctive of CrossWinds and our mission. If you are wondering about 2 Thessalonians, we will get to that book in the fall. In a few weeks, after we finalize our summer teaching plans, I will share them.

If you have been with us, you know that we looked at the second coming of Christ for the last two weeks. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 talks about Jesus coming back for his people. We learned that when Jesus comes back, all Christians from history, both the living and the dead, will get resurrection bodies, just like Jesus' resurrection body. These bodies are as real as ours but will not get old, weak, or die. The dead in Christ will rise first and receive their resurrection bodies. Christians who are alive when Christ returns will also have their living bodies transformed into resurrection bodies. At that time, it will be a great reunion with our loved from who died in Christ before us. From that time forward, we will always be with Jesus. What a glorious day that will be.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, the verses we studied last week, Paul spoke about another return of Christ. That return is Jesus' return to judge sin and sinners on the earth. This is the awesome day of God's wrath. In the Bible, it is called the day of the Lord. That will not be a day of gladness but a day of sadness. It will be the end of the world as we know it. Even in that time of wrath, there is good news for us. We won't be there. We won't experience God's wrath. As Christians, no matter how many times we fail Jesus, Jesus' death on the cross is sufficient. The cross has all of our sins covered. On the day of Jesus' wrath, none of that wrath will be directed at us. All of it has already been absorbed by Jesus and paid for by him. For that, we rejoice.

One danger from the last two weeks is that we can become so focused on the second coming of Christ that we are left indifferent about living for Jesus in the present. Paul transitions right out of his teaching about Jesus' future returns

and, in the final verses of the book, speaks practically about living for Jesus today.

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:12–22 (ESV)

There is a lot to cover in these verses. Today, I plan to cover verses 12-15. We will pick up the rest in two weeks. At first, it looks like Paul is simply spraying random bits of ethical instruction at the end of the letter. If you know the apostle Paul, you know that randomness was not his style. He has structure and purpose in everything he does and writes. That is true here. Let me show you.

Verses 12-13 — Speak about God’s will in the relationship between pastors and their people

Verses 14-15 — Speak about God’s will with troublesome people in the church

Verses 16-18 — Speak about God’s will in worship

Verses 19-22 — Speak about God’s will in testing prophecy

This morning, we will begin by looking at how we honor God in the relationship between pastors and their people. Then we will see how to honor God with the troublesome people in the church, that is, people who are spiritually stuck. If I were a topical preacher, I wouldn’t have chosen these topics on Mother’s Day and Graduation Sunday. At CrossWinds, we teach through the Bible. We don’t skip things. We don’t just teach what people want to hear. We let

the Bible determine what we need to hear. God has blessed that. With that in mind, we will dive into these densely packed verses.

### **What are pastors' responsibilities to their people?**

**Pastors must labor among the people, even to the point of exhaustion.**

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you... 1 Thessalonians 5:12 (ESV)

While I used the term pastor in my outline, I am using that term broadly. In this verse, Paul speaks of spiritual leaders. This verse also applies to elders, not just to pastors. The keyword is the word *labor*. Pastors are to labor among the people. Behind the English word labor is the Greek word *kopiaō*. Paul loves this word. It is graphic. It means to work to the point of exhaustion, to work so that you sweat and are weary. A pastor or church leader is responsible to work hard at their job. They are to work to the point of sweat and exhaustion. This is important because pastoring is one of the few professions where you set your own pace. You set your hours. You decide on the quality of your work, and most people in the church will not know if you are slacking. Paul says if you are a spiritual leader, you work hard. Don't treat the job like it is a walk in the park. You are shepherding Christ's church. You need to work hard to take care of Jesus' sheep.

An observation from this passage is that the pastor is to labor among YOU. The pastor is responsible for working for the people of his church, not for another organization outside the church. This is a common trap many pastors fall into. Over time, they get bored of their church, so they start working on a book

project, a radio show, or serving in a local ministry. None of those are bad things, but the paycheck comes from the church. His primary responsibility is to his own church, not another ministry. That is a corrective some pastors need to hear.

Notice the pastor's responsibility is to labor "among" you. Pastoring is not long-distance work. This is face-to-face, intimate work. A pastor cannot preach a sermon and go home. They must take the time to talk with people, know people, and love people. They are not just to administrate a church, but they must love and shepherd the people of the church. They are to be among the people, not distant from the people.

What should the pastors and leaders be doing in their work? While there are many things we can add to this list, let me give you the big three.

1. According to 1 Timothy 5:17, they should be preaching and teaching.
2. According to 1 Thessalonians 2:11, they should be involved in individual discipleship and teaching in smaller groups.
3. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15, they should be involved in pastoral care. They do not do that alone. There are deacons and others to help, but the pastor must not neglect personal care.

Paul spoke about pastors working hard, let's see if he lived it. Let's look at Paul's work ethic.

[For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 1 Thessalonians 2:9 \(ESV\)](#)

When Paul came to Thessalonica, there was no church to support him. He had a day job and plus worked nights to begin a church. Nobody can work 24

hours a day all the time, except for Elon Musk, but the principle is still true. A pastor should be hardworking. Expect to work in the evenings. Paul did.

But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 1 Thessalonians 2:7 (ESV)

The primary application of this verse is that Paul was gentle with them, like a nursing mother with her children, but a secondary observation is that a nursing mother is a 24-hour-a-day job. It is a lot of work. You are on duty night and day. That is church leadership. If a nursing mother sacrifices 24 hours a day for her physical children, a pastor should expect to sacrifice 24 hours a day for his spiritual children.

At CrossWinds, staff has 2 days off a week. I tell them that is what we would like to give you, but that probably won't be what we will give you. Be careful about insisting on your days off when a crisis happens or there is work to be done.

If someone goes to the hospital, don't tell me it is your day off. You need to be there. If it is Saturday morning, as we are hanging drywall in the gym, as a pastor, don't tell me I can't help because it is my day off. For everyone in the room, Saturday is their day off, and they are helping anyway. As a pastor, you should be leading in that kind of sacrifice.

For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 2 Thessalonians 3:7 (ESV)

The word idle in Greek means undisciplined. The only way a pastor can work hard and be productive is to be highly disciplined, structured, and organized. A pastor is responsible for living a disciplined life so they can work hard. Paul was disciplined and organized. Pastors should be, too. While I talk

about the importance of living a disciplined and organized life, I recognize this is an area where I can always improve, but the principle is always true. If a pastor wings it instead of working hard to organize and prepare, things will not go well. They are not stewarding Christ's church well.

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. Colossians 1:28 (ESV)

Paul's goal was not to get everyone barely saved, so they could slide into heaven by the skin of their teeth. His goal was to work hard to present everyone mature in Christ. Pastors are not content with marginal spiritual maturity. Their goal should be that their people become complete in Christ. A pastor owes this to their people.

For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. 1 Timothy 4:10 (ESV)

The word *toil* is the same word we have in this passage. It means to work to the point of sweat and exhaustion, to give every last bit of your energy to something. The word *strive* in Greek is *agonizomai*. We get the English word agony from it. It means to work to the point of pain. When it comes to how a pastor works in the church since he is dealing with eternal matter and people's souls, he is to work hard, even to the point of exhaustion and pain to present everyone mature in Christ. How is that for a pastor's job description?

Of course, this can be overdone. I think of Robert Murray McCheney, a brilliant pastor from another era who died at the age of 29. He wore himself out in ministry. He was brilliant and wrote a number of books before age 29. As he was dying, he said to a friend, "I have exhausted the horse. Now I can not carry the

mail.” Ministry is a marathon, not a sprint. Pastors must pace themselves accordingly so they don’t have a heart attack like many do.

The problem for most pastors is not overwork but a lack of discipline, lack of focus, and lack of energy.

**Pastors are responsible for exercising spiritual authority.**

**We ask you, brothers, to respect those who... are over you in the Lord...  
1 Thessalonians 5:12 (ESV)**

The Greek word for being over someone means to lead or direct them. This refers to the elders and pastors of the church. They are given authority to lead in the church. It is a delegated authority that ultimately comes from Christ, not the people. Pastors and elders are not leading the church to please the people but to please Jesus. They will answer to Jesus. Pastors and elders are responsible for the church's health and well-being, developing creative plans, and creating and achieving spiritual objectives.

The best way to see this in action is to reflect on CrossWind’s history. I remember the elder meeting when we started discussing what it would take to become a multisite church. The elders led that charge, and you followed their lead. Today, we have a campus in Spencer with 150 people on Sunday mornings. I think about the elders leading the charge on updating the Spirit Lake facilities. I think about the elders leading the charge to change service times and put our children’s education program during services instead of between services. As a result, the number of children exposed to age-appropriate Christian education on Sunday mornings doubled. It would have been easier not to change a thing, but



elders and pastors have a responsibility to lead and, in so doing, help people become mature in Christ and reach people with Christ.

**Pastors are responsible for providing biblical instruction.**

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who... admonish you, 1 Thessalonians 5:12 (ESV)

The Greek word for admonish is *noutheteo*. It means instruction with a view toward correction. The verb occurs seven times in the New Testament, and each time, it has a negative connotation. It is correcting someone, not in a harsh, judgmental, or arrogant way. It is correction out of love. It is meeting over coffee, then gently and lovingly speaking the truth. This is the kind of correction a parent has with their child. It is out of love. It is for their best.

Look what Paul says about a good pastor.

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. Titus 1:9 (ESV)

A good pastor is responsible for holding firmly to his Bible so he can do two things when he teaches. 1. Give sound teaching to those who hear. This is positive. 2. Rebuke and correct those who contradict it. This is correction in love.

Let's summarize. Pastors and elders are responsible for working very hard, especially in public preaching, personal instruction, and pastoral care. They have a responsibility to use their pastoral authority to lead the church, set goals, and direct the church's future. They are also responsible for teaching with a view toward life change.

If we look at the same verses, they also show us the responsibilities the people of the church have to the pastors and leaders of the church.

## What are the people's responsibilities to the pastors?

People are to respect their pastors.

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 1 Thessalonians 5:12 (ESV)

The word respect is the Greek word *oída*. It means to know. It refers to knowledge that comes from experience. It is to arrive at a knowledge of something by experiencing it in person. In a relationship, it carries the idea of knowing someone deep enough that you have respect and appreciation for them because you know their heart. You know them deeply enough that you appreciate them. You respect them because you know their worth.

This is far beyond knowing someone's favorite ice cream, zip code, or email address. It is knowing their heart so you have genuine love, care, and respect.

Being unkind or critical of someone is easy if you don't know them. It is much harder to be harsh with them if you know their heart. This is one of the reasons years ago we began the practice of once a quarter having a meal together before our elder meetings. Once a quarter, at separate elder meetings, we share prayer requests and pray for one another. It is hard to be harsh or combative when you eat with people and pray with them. Eating and praying together helped us love one another. It dramatically reduced the amount of tension in the room when it came to tough decisions.

A congregation is responsible for getting to know their pastors and leaders. The more you know them, the less critical you will be of them. The more

you know them, the more you will become an ally to the church's mission instead of an adversary.

While we are on this topic, I want to say a word on the financial support of pastors. As a disclaimer, know I am not asking for a raise. I am very blessed by you. CrossWinds does a good job taking care of its staff.

Nevertheless, the Bible connects respect for pastors with financial compensation. I know many pastors in churches who are not financially appreciated. They feel it.

The old saying is, "Send a pastor to seminary to keep him humble, then to a church to keep him poor." If a church does not give adequate compensation to its pastor, that shows a lack of respect.

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 1 Timothy 5:17 (ESV)

Honor is the idea of respect. Obviously, this is not simply personal respect, but it also pertains to financial respect.

In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:14 (ESV)

If you are a pastor doing your job as you should, you work to the point of sweat, exhaustion, fatigue, and even pain; there is not much extra time to care for your family, plus work and another job to pay the bills. The church should honor its pastor by giving adequate compensation. The church will be blessed by giving honor that is due.

**People are to have high esteem for their pastors.**

and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work... 1 Thessalonians 5:13a (ESV)

This is similar to respect, but there is an important difference. The Greek word for esteem means to consider, regard, or think. It is deeper than knowing someone enough to respect them. Respect is something you give to someone. Esteem is how you think about someone. Paul tells us to think highly of our pastors and leaders. We are told to esteem them very highly. The Greek behind the phrase “very highly” means beyond measure. That is a command from the Lord. Why do we think highly of pastors and leaders? It is because of their personality? Is it because they tell great jokes? Is it because they wear trendy clothing or because they have a tattoo? Absolutely not. It is because of their work. The people in the church are to have great respect and think highly of their pastors and leaders not because of their trendy haircut or their age but because of their work. If you have a faithful pastor who preaches the word with their finger in the text and is doing the best with the gifts they have, appreciate them. Think the best of them. They are not Francis Chan. They are not David Jeremiah. They are just a garden-variety pastor doing their best to faithfully hold out the word of God in a world that has left Jesus and the Bible behind.

Today, so much is driven by personality, looks, lights, and who can put on a better show that we forget we respect and think highly of local pastors and leaders simply because of their faithful work, opening the word, leading the church, and caring for broken hearts.

Let me show you what this looks like in action in the life of the apostle Paul.

and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. Galatians 4:14 (ESV)

Paul had some kind of bodily condition. We don't know what it was. From what we can tell, it was with his eyes. Eye infections in the dust-filled middle east are common. Paul's eyes were probably filled with puss. They were swollen. Paul looked gross. He didn't wear stylish clothes and smoke a cigar, yet the Galatians loved him. They treated him with great honor and respect, not because of his looks or jokes, but because of his work.

...For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. Galatians 4:15 (ESV)

They loved Paul so much they would have torn their eyes out and given them to him if they could have. That is respect. That is esteem for his work. That is esteeming beyond measure. Paul wasn't wearing Lululemon or anything trendy. He was just an old man with a gross disfigured face and puss-filled eyes.

There is clear application in this. Whatever level of respect or appreciation you have for your pastors or leaders, increase your respect and esteem for them. Be careful about comparing your pastors or leaders to others the rockstar pastors in the media. In a loving relationship with them, be kind and overlook their weaknesses and frailties. We all have them. In love speak the best of them to others; don't run them down gossip. That is no benefit to you. Encourage them. Express gratitude to them.

**People are to get along with one another.**

...Be at peace among yourselves. 1 Thessalonians 5:13 (ESV)

There is nothing more taxing, frustrating, and exhausting than division in the church. When people are bickering and fighting, it takes so much energy and time. Bickering sucks the vitality out of a church. We give our energy to

quarreling with people inside the church instead of reaching those outside the church.

The Bible tells us to work hard to be at peace with others in the church.

...let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. Romans 14:19 (ESV)

be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3 (ESV)

Sometimes, people in the church will not agree with the choices made by church leadership. Should we call up a friend and complain? No! Paul says to work hard to be at peace with one another and your leaders. Obviously, this presupposes the pastors and leaders are faithful to the Bible and the word. When pastors and leaders are doing the best they can in the strength of the Holy Spirit and relying on the Scriptures, submit to them, follow them, and do not be contentious behind the scenes against them. I have done this job for over 30 years. I know how it goes. If you don't like something in the church, the people of the church begin to murmur and grumble. That doesn't end well. Think of the Israelites and their murmuring and grumbling against Moses in the wilderness. It made Moses bitter, and in the end, their grumbling kept the Exodus generation out of the Promised Land. This is why it is important to work hard for peace.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)

Obey your leaders and submit to them. That is about as straightforward as you can say it. If church leaders aren't asking people to do something unbiblical or ungodly, just obey them. Why do they ask you to do things? They are keeping

watch over your souls and will give an account to God for their leadership. If you think leaders in the church made a wrong decision on something, the good news is that they are accountable to God for their decisions, not you. The people in the church are accountable to God for how they obey and submit to the leaders of the church. Do they grumble or work as part of the team?

When people in the church begin murmuring or grumbling or undermining either the pastors or the people on preference issues, not scriptural issues, that is no advantage to you. It only hinders the health of the church and distracts from the mission of the church. It ends up in a lot of sideways wasted energy.

Let me give you an example. This is an easy example because, as a church family, we handled this one well. As you know, we recently purchased chairs. Not everyone was in favor of chairs. Some think we should have kept the pews. You emailed me. I love the way you handled it. You communicated your thought, but you agreed to submit to the decision of the elders. You were not going to allow yourself to bicker over the seating in the church when Jesus is what is important in the church. The leaders will give account to Jesus for their decisions. As people, we give an account for how we support our leaders. It is of no advantage to be a murmuring, irritable, and resentful person.

Remember that pews are not a biblical issue. They are a preference issue. It was a preference decision made by the elders after considering what would help us better reach the community. As I said, this is an easy example to use because those who struggled with the change handled it well. I am proud of them.

We talked about the relationship between the people and their pastors. Lets look at our relationships with one another.

### **What is the church's responsibility to one another?**

Like every church, CrossWinds has people who are struggling. Some are struggling relationally, and some are struggling with sin. Church growth happens when people mature through their spiritual sticking points. When people in the church mature in Christ, they reach more people with Christ.

In verses 14 and 15, we meet five types of people who are spiritually stuck. They are not becoming like Christ. They need to get unstuck. How does that happen? It involves every one of us. The key word in these verses is *brothers*.

[And we urge you, brothers,...](#) 1 Thessalonians 5:14a (ESV)

When people in church are spiritually stuck, our first thought is, "It is the pastor's job to fix them." While there is some truth to that, these verses tell us it is everyone's job to disciple them and help them. Church is not showing up on Sunday to stare at the back of somebody's head. Church is getting involved in the family of the church, having real relationships with people, relationships that are close enough that we know when someone is spiritually stuck and needs help to mature. We should not come to church with an audience mentality. We must get to know other people so we can speak into the lives of people. Paul gives us a number of examples.

**We are to admonish the idle.**

[And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle,...](#) 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ESV)



The word idle in Greek can mean disorderly or undisciplined. It is often used in a military sense for disorderly conduct, insubordination, disobeying orders, or a soldier not fulfilling his duties. Eventually, it came to be a generalized term for anyone who was not involved in following through on their responsibilities. This word can refer to good-hearted laziness or hard-hearted belliousness.

If everybody in the church is heading in one direction, these people are going in the other direction. Everybody in the church may understand their spiritual duty to get involved and put their shoulder to the wheel, but these people sit on the sidelines. They claim to be on the team, but rarely show up for practice. They just aren't supportive. They are like dead weight. Frequently, these people are critical of the church but rarely give or help in the church.

How do we deal with these people? We are to admonish them. There is no special formula or program. It is individual people, who know these fringe people in the church, taking them out for coffee, loving on them, and encouraging them. It is ordinary people inviting them and encouraging them to get involved. This works much better than an invitation from the pastor or church leader.

These conversations are supportive, not harsh. They are loving, not hurtful. Everything is spoken in love. It is spoken in relationship. It is spoken out of love for the person on the fringe.

This is not correction from a stance of superiority. It is out of love. It is loving people enough to care about them and to warn them. We love our children. We correct our children in love. We want what is best for our

children. This is the same. The best way to get ordinary people unstuck is ordinary people help them.

**We are to encourage the worried.**

And we urge you, brothers,... encourage the fainthearted,... 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ESV)

While the idle were on the fringes of the church, the worried are huddled in the center of the church. The Greek word for fainthearted means a person with a small soul. A person with a large soul in Greek is a person who is willing to take risks because a great principle is at stake. It refers to courage and boldness for a cause.

Huddled in the middle of the church are not people with large souls but people with small souls. They hate change. They love tradition. They only want to do what we did last year. Risk is not acceptable. There were some people in Thessalonica like this, just as there are some people at CrossWinds like this. How do we deal with them?

We simply encourage them. Encourage in Greek means to come alongside someone to speak to them. There are not any shortcuts to this. It is relationships. We need to take the time for them. If you know somebody is worried, fearful, or despairing about the future come alongside them, build a relationship with them, and encourage them. We listen to them. We care about them. We refresh them. What else are you going to do? Send them a postcard? That won't work. It is everyone's job to help people become spiritually unstuck.

**We are to help the weak.**

And we urge you, brothers,... help the weak,... 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ESV)

Who are the weak? This could refer to the spiritually weak, such as the weaker brother in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, but I don't think that is what Paul has in mind. I think he was referring to the morally weak. We know these people in church. They are susceptible to sin. You barely pick them up out of the hole they fall back into a sinful pattern again. These people find it hard to do God's will. They fall back into the same sins over and over again. There are plenty of these people in church. If that is you, you are welcome here. You will find lots of company. If they weren't spiritually stuck, these people would be such a help around the church. What are we to do?

Help them! The picture is to hold someone tightly and not let them go. They may be caught in a roller coast of sin, but people in the church won't let them go. We won't give up on them. That is how we disciple one another to maturity.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.... Galatians 6:1a (ESV)

It is so easy to see the weak and ignore them. They will go away. I don't have time for them. They are not my concern. That is not the way of the church. We help the weak.

**We are to be patient with the wearisome.**

And we urge you, brothers,... be patient with them all. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ESV)

Who are we to be patient with? Everyone who tries our patience. It is easy to get frustrated with people, angry with them, disappointed with them, and discouraged with them, especially if you give so much to them and, they are

making as much progress as an arthritic snail. Paul says to be patient with people who try our patience.

How patient are we to be? More patient than you have been. We are called to be as patient with them as God is patient with us. That is pretty patient. You know how patient and forgiving God is with you. Be that way with other people in the church.

**We are never to take revenge.**

See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 1 Thessalonians 5:15 (ESV)

This point gets an entire verse. The assumption is in church, somebody will do something to hurt you. The hardest people to work with in church are people who sin against you.

Let's be honest. It is only a matter of time until church people hurt you until they do evil against you or speak evil of you. They will either say hurtful things about you to your face or behind your back. They will snub you. They will cut you out of their social circles. Some people in the church break up marriages, others commit sexual sin. Some people in the church will treat children inappropriately. Some people in the church steal money. In 30 years, I have seen and been through a lot. Folks, Christians are sinners, too.

When people in the church sin against us, our first instinct is to get even. The second instinct is to leave the church. Most of the time that is not the right answer.

Paul says, that when people do evil against us in the church, we seek to do good to them. This word seek, is not in passive. It is in an active thing. We

don't just hope good things happen to the person who has done evil to us. We go out of our way to do good to them.

The world retaliates. As Christians, especially in the church, with other Christians who sin against us, we repay evil with good.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Romans 12:19 (ESV)

God is the only one who has a right to get even.

To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:20–21 (ESV)

Our goal is always to overcome the evil done against us by doing good to the person in the church who hurt us.

I can tell you Christians have done far more hurtful and sinful things to me than those outside the church. Getting even is not the way. That only tears apart a church and shames the name of Christ. We leave vengeance in God's hands and church discipline in the elder's hands.

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? Matthew 5:46 (ESV)

God rewards us when we go out of our way to love those who hurt us.

## **Conclusion**

We covered a lot today. We looked at the relationship between pastors and leaders of the church with the people of the church.

The pastors and leaders have a responsibility to the church to:

1. Work hard
2. Exercise leadership and authority in a loving way.
3. Teach the people the word.

The people of the church have a responsibility to the pastors and leaders to:

1. Appreciate their pastors.
2. Esteem them highly, which means to think the best of them for their work.
3. Live at peace with one another.

The people of the church have a responsibility to one another to:

1. Admonish the idle and rebellious
2. Encourage the worried
3. Help the weak
4. Be patient with the wearisome
5. Never take revenge against those who sin against them.



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