

Model Relating

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[0 : 00] 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 12. We ask you brothers to respect those who labour 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 faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil but always do good, 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. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He who calls you is faithful, he will surely do it. Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

[1 : 19] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Wouldn't it be great to be part of a community where you knew that the people around you cared for you?

Where people were patient with you? Where people took the time to understand how you were going? Where you could be honest about how things were going?

Knowing that people wouldn't think less of you for being who you were? Wouldn't it be great to be a place where you weren't taken for granted? Not just a cog in the wheel to maximise the company's bottom line.

Wouldn't it be great if people only ever did you good? That's what only ever happened to you.

People were not out to bring you down and to give you a hard time. Where there was mutual encouragement going on, where people were building you up and encouraging you to keep pressing on day after day.

And where you could laugh at your weaknesses and be encouraged in your strengths. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Well, welcome to the Christian community in Thessalonica.

[2 : 30] Welcome to the ideal household of God. The household of God that he's created by the precious blood of his son, the Lord Jesus. We've been working our way through 1 Thessalonians, we've come to the end now.

The Thessalonian church was a model church, it was a good one. Their reputation had spread out all through Macedonia and Archaea. Their message of what had happened to them had radiated out.

And they had received the apostles warmly when they came to them. They had received the apostles' message completely. Not as man's word, but as it really is God's word.

And this word had changed them from being enemies of God to being his dearly loved people. They had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and were waiting for his son Jesus to return.

Jesus who he's raised from the dead. God has raised Jesus from the dead and Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. And they're doing really well.

[3 : 37] We'll have a look at chapter 4 verse 1. Chapter 4 verse 1. Finally brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

And chapter 4 verse 9 and 10. Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you. Yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.

That indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you brothers to do this more and more. The thing is you can never be reminded of doing what you're doing well to keep doing so more and more.

Which brings us then to today's passage. Which in God's sovereign timing, God would have us hear his word. And what we're hearing today in this passage is God's word for us today and it's for our good.

So let's dig in. It might seem a bit strange though, mightn't it? That I'm preaching on these next few verses when they are kind of about me.

[4 : 44] But bear with us as we do so. However, let's hear it as God's word, right? Not man's word. So let's have a look at God's word on relationships, particularly with those who are over us in the Lord.

It's clear in God's world that there is an appropriate order and respect for authority. Without that kind of thing, society falls apart.

I mean you've got to look at the photos on the newspapers around the place at the moment of societies falling apart when there's no order in them. No authority recognised in them.

And God is the one who made the world, he is Lord of all, he made the lot. And there are requirements for the people that he's put in positions of authority to actually live by.

And there are requirements for those, both leaders and those who are led. And when that goes well, it's obvious for all to see, right?

[5 : 46] But when it doesn't, it's equally obvious for all to see. So let me tell you, this passage here has been a very challenging passage of Scripture for me to prepare to preach and teach today.

At one level it would have been easier to have someone else do it, but at another level it's entirely appropriate to simply hear what God has to say to us. So look at verse 12. We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

What you have here is the members of the church being in view, particularly the male members, but that doesn't exclude women as well, and those who have bent the knee to the Lord Jesus.

That's who he's talking about. Paul and his co-authors, Sylvanus and Timothy, are asking, setting before them, what the people in the church of Thessalonica should be doing, how they should be living, and by extension all believers in God's gatherings all over the world.

That is, respect for those who labour among them. Now, respect is the idea of giving honour, not to speak badly about someone.

[7 : 11] Now, respect is not something that you can demand from others. Respect is something that others give. Right? That's how it works. It's something that others voluntarily give.

You can't demand respect. You have to be respectable. At the same time, there is a command from God for people to actually give respect to those in positions of authority.

Now, unfortunately, in Australian culture, this is something that we struggle with. We really do. And it's clear that church life involves hierarchy.

A hierarchy of someone being over others in the Lord. Just as Christ Jesus is head of the church.

And there are those who labour over others who are in the Lord. The Lord Jesus has placed people in authority over his people.

[8 : 14] So, what should the household of God be expecting of those over them in the Lord to start with? Well, number one, that they'll be working, that they'll be labouring.

Sometimes people ask me, usually younger people, what do you do during the rest of your week? I mean, you only turn up for an hour on a Sunday.

What do you do? Well, let me just show you a video. I don't know how it goes, right? This is a bit of an experiment, but I'll show you the video and see if it makes sense to you.

Here you go. So, the point of the story is nothing happens by itself, right? Now, you women know that. It's the truth. Blokes, you need to get a hold of it.

That's true. But there are people working and labouring amongst our church. Things don't just happen automatically by themselves, all right? Around churches.

[9 : 20] They don't. People labour amongst us to make things happen. So, you can expect those who are over us in the Lord to be labouring. Secondly, you can expect that they'll be admonishing.

That's what the scriptures say here. Respect those who labour among you and are over the Lord and admonish you. Here we go. As pastor teachers bring the word of God to bear, God's word will

bring admonishment to members of the household at times.

Not because pastors are power-hungry despots, okay? But because they are faithful labourers amongst God's flock.

Now, admonishment is the idea of correction and of warning, okay? Either warning that a certain conduct is inappropriate, so don't go there.

Or calling people to stop living in a certain manner that's not pleasing to God, that's inappropriate. For those who call themselves followers of the Lord Jesus. And notice it doesn't say respect those who are over you that you agree with that affirm your behaviour.

[10 : 38] Right? It will be the case that the very nature of admonishing is going to be challenging. Right?

Expect those who labour over the household of God and are over people in the Lord to bring God's word to bear and that it will actually at times be an admonishment and you'll be asked to change behaviour.

That is the nature of pastoral ministry. That is the nature of God's work in this world amongst his people.

And notice though, that we are to esteem those who labour over us very highly in love because of their work.

It is not an easy task to bring God's word to bear and to admonish someone. It's very, very difficult.

[11 : 48] But notice, it's not just very highly, I want to put this to you, it's actually exceedingly very, very, very, very high esteem.

We are to hold those who labour in the Lord over us. It's very, very, very, very highly, beyond all measure is the weight of the word.

Ephesians chapter 3 verse 20 uses the same word. The life of the patient in this world is in their hands.

Right? Or the brain surgeon or the cardiothoracic surgeon. But the gospel worker has the eternal destiny of those that they are working amongst in their hands.

Can you see that? That is the weight, that is the responsibility of those who labour amongst God's people. That is the kind of work that's going on here.

[13 : 17] So there is an esteem and respect that is due to those who labour among us in the household of God. And as we do that, there will be a peace in the church.

See it there? To esteem them highly in love because of their work. And be at peace among yourselves. It won't be an unruly chaos and everyone doing whatever seems right in their own eyes. Which was a major, major problem amongst the people of God in the time of the judges. And continues throughout history. So that is what we expect to how we are to actually be thinking about those over us in the Lord.

Now let's consider the relationships with those around us. Alright, here we go. Not only are the Thessalonians taught how to relate to those over them in the Lord.

But there's an appropriate relating then to one another around us in the Lord. Alright. It's not just those over us who have the responsibility to keep the household of God in good order.

[14 : 33] That's true. But we all have a place in making the church function well. And here are a few ways. See verse 14. Admonish the idol. Remember, admonishment is the idea of correcting and warning.

Now, being idle and being lazy and not working for a living if you can is never appropriate. And yet, that's not the whole weight of the word behind it here.

See the footnote in your Bibles there? I don't like doing this but it's important we do so. The footnote says it captures it better. It says here, disorderly or undisciplined.

So the New English Translation has it, unruly. American Standard Version has it unruly or disordered, undisciplined. Insubordinate even would be the weight of the word.

That is, those who won't submit to order, who won't submit to instruction. If there's others around about us, this is really important, right? If there's others around about us who are disorderly, insubordinate, unruly, it's the job of all of us to call them, to warn them, to admonish them, to come into line.

[15 : 49] And we're to encourage the faint-hearted. Those who are discouraged. Those for whom life is difficult and their future looks bleak.

Those who have been disappointed by how things have turned out for them. And how are we going to encourage? How are we going to do that? We'll come back to chapter 4, verse 9 and 10. Look at the big picture.

Look at the big picture. Chapter 4, verse 9 and 10. Now, brothers, concerning brotherly love, you have no need to write to you, for yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.

That's indeed what you're doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more. And it keeps pressing on then, chapter 5, verse 9 and 10. Have a look at it with me. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and of love and the helmet of hope and of salvation.

[16:51] For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we're awake or asleep, we might live with him.

Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you were doing. So we're to love each other, care for each other and build each other up by reminding each other of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

Look at the big picture. The future is bright, even if the present looks dull. And we're to help the weak, verse 14.

Practically, Christianity is the religion that doesn't despise the weak. And Christianity is the culture that doesn't despise the weak.

I mean, the atheist despises the weak, the helpless, the unborn and the forale and the elderly. Christianity is not survival of the fittest. Dog eat dog, climbing over one another at the top.

[17:51] We help the weak. We care for the downcast. And notice we're to be patient with everyone. The undisciplined, the faint-hearted and the weak.

Not demanding progress in a hurry, but encouraging it all the same. And the list goes on, verse 15. See how counter-cultural Christian community is to be.

Don't repay anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. How radical is that? How transforming to a group of people who would be like that.

Like our Lord Jesus. When he suffered, he made no threats. On the cross, at the time when the world was doing its most evil thing in all of history, he was repaying with good.

Loving his mother. That was important. And laying down his life for the saving of the world. Would that we would be like that.

[18:52] Can you see how good God's word is and how good things are under it? And how good living his way would be for all of society?

And particularly for the Christian world. If only that was the case. And consider right relationships within. The Thessalonians are told to relate to themselves, to address their own hearts, knowing what God's will is for them.

Rejoice and pray and give thanks. That is God's will for them. God's will for us. Rejoice always. Rejoice. Right? Notice of rejoice always.

Not just some of the time. Which includes when life is rough. When life is tough. When I'm suffering. When I'm disappointed. When I'm frustrated. That's when I especially need to give myself a good talking to.

Right? The loudest voice in my head is me. So what I need to do is look beyond the present situation and remind myself of what God says in his word.

[19:58] So what am I going to preach to myself? Right? Well, rejoice. It can be tough to tell myself to do this but what am I going to rejoice in?

Well, I'm going to rejoice that my name is written in heaven. Luke chapter 10 verse 20. The psalmist tells me and tells us that those who take refuge in the Lord can rejoice knowing God's protection. Psalm 31 verse 7. Knowing God's love for me when it feels like no one else does. Let me read out to you Psalm 31 verse 7.

I'll rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love because you've seen my affliction. You've known the distress of my soul. We rejoice because we have a sure and certain hope of being in glory for eternity with our maker.

That's reason to rejoice. Romans chapter 5. Let me read out to you. Romans chapter 5 verses 2 to 5. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

[21:08] Not only that but we rejoice in our sufferings. Knowing that suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces character and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame

because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

So we're to rejoice always. We're to pray without ceasing if only that were the case. When I wake up before I do anything in the day, before anything I get involved in, in each and every situation I'm in I'll be praying.

Persistently asking the Father for his help. Not doing things in my own strength. Asking him for his provision, for his care, for his wisdom. Prayer is the antidote to pride.

It's recognising my dependence upon God for everything that happens in this world. Why does my heart beat? Because God says for it to beat the next beat.

I'm dependent upon God for everything. Prayer is the antidote to pride. And we're to be thankful in all circumstances. Just like being joyful.

[22 : 17] We're to be thankful. Whatever the situation. I can't help but think of Corrie ten Boone. The Dutch Christian famous in the story in the movie The Hiding Place.

I'm sure some of you have seen the movie, read the book. She was in a Nazi concentration camp because she's hiding Jews and helping them to escape the Nazis.

And then she was caught by the Nazis. And one incident comes to my mind. There's plenty, I'm sure. There was an outbreak of fleas where they were actually in the dormitories or lack thereof that they were in.

And that would make life circumstances very, very miserable, wouldn't it? I mean, I've had fleas bite my leg once or twice and that was horrible. But imagine that's where you lived, in amongst the fleas. What did Corrie ten Boone do? Gave thanks to God for the fleas. And then realised, oh, while there's fleas in our dormitory, we can meet together the other Christians and pray and read the Bible.

[23 : 25] And the guards are not coming in here to give us a hard time. They don't want to get bitten by the fleas. I wonder if I would do that.

I wonder if you could do that. It's God's will for us to be rejoicing always, praying without ceasing and giving thanks in all situations.

How sweet our fellowship would be if that was the case. There was no grumbling, complaining.

Roy, wake up. How sweet our fellowship would be if that was the way.

And we're not to quench the spirit. Quenching is, you know, you have a hot day, you have a cool drink and it quenches your thirst. Quenching is to cool off.

The idea of putting something out, putting the fire out with some water, something like that. God's Holy Spirit enlightens us to the truth that Jesus is Lord.

[24 : 24] That's what his spirit does. And so brings us to align our lives in accordance with his lordship. We had a whole conference last year on the work of the Holy Spirit.

God's Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin. That there's a way that we're living in rebellion to Jesus' lordship that needs to change. That's what God's spirit does for us.

Don't quench it when he's working in us like that. In John chapter 16 we hear about it. It also, God's spirit brings us to repentance and brings us to recognise our sin.

That's what he does. And God's Holy Spirit convicts us of Jesus' righteousness. Jesus is truly God's righteous one, the son of God, the Messiah.

Jesus wasn't Satan. As the Pharisees accused him of being. God's Holy Spirit also convicts us of judgement. That Satan is condemned, we're told in John chapter 16.

[25 : 23] That Satan is defeated. He holds no power and is not to be feared. His schemes amount to nothing. In fact, his schemes ultimately serve God's purposes. So we don't quench the spirit, nor do we actually despise prophecies.

Those who want to make progress under the direction of the Holy Spirit will allow ourselves to be taught from the scriptures. Which were written by the prophets under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we're told.

In 2 Peter chapter 1. Prophecy is not so much foretelling, right? It can involve that. But prophecy is more to do with foretelling.

That is, speaking the Word of God forth. Explaining the Word of God and applying the Word of God forth in our lives. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, we're told in Revelation 19 verse 10.

Rejecting God's Word is a sure way to reject and to shipwreck your faith. And rejecting God's Word is a sure way to shipwreck a church.

[26 : 36] And rejecting God's Word is a sure way to destroy a denomination. Which is why we detest everything that is taught by God's Word.

And reject and abstain from every form of evil. Not just some forms of evil, but every form of evil. There's no form of evil that's okay. Now that brings us into the end of the book.

We won't labour much longer. But there's transformation and sanctification, which is God's work in us. Transformation, verse 23. Notice how Paul bookends a section, verse 13.

We are to be at peace among ourselves because God is the God of peace. Reconciling us to himself by the cross, that's what he does. And making us one new family of believers from every tribe and nation and tongue on the world.

And that's what the Lord brings us into that family. Living orderly, peaceful lives as brothers and sisters in Christ. And we learn of Paul's prayer then for the Thessalonians.

[27 : 39] A prayer for us to be blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus. He wants us to be holy, holified. We can't be any more sanctified than we already are.

Right? See verse 23. We now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus.

He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. We have been sanctified. We have been justified.

We have been set apart. We have been forgiven. We have been made free by the Son of God.

Who has died for us. That's happened for us. All this has been done for us by the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We have been sanctified.

And what happens now as we wait for the return of the Lord Jesus. We're waiting him to return. Is that we're to put off sin. And put that to death in our mortal bodies.

[28 : 44] We're to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We're to be seeing more and more clearly the sinfulness of sin. As God's word and spirit works in us.

And we see the holiness of God. We're to put to death the sinful nature. If we're not quenching the spirit.

We will be seeing the wickedness of the world. We will notice the crudeness of humour. And we'll become more and more uncomfortable with it.

And we'll notice the sinfulness of sin in our lives. And become more and more uncomfortable with it. It's okay to be uncomfortable when God's word is heard.

It's appropriate. We're to conforming our life more and more to the likeness of Jesus. Don't quench the spirit.

[29 : 54] Don't despise prophecy. But the prayer is that we'll be sanctified completely. That we'll be holified completely.

And the promise is that we certainly will be because we are already. Verse 24. See, he who calls you is faithful.

He will surely do it. When the Lord Jesus comes on the clouds of heaven. He will surely have us completely. Spirit, soul, body and mind.

Blameless. Transformed. And made fit for the holy sanctuary. In the presence of the holy God. We will be there. God is faithful.

He does not lie. He has promised he will do it. And he certainly will. There will be no accusation that can stand against you or me on that day.

[30 : 58] We certainly will be sanctified. We will be blameless. We will be perfect in his sight. Because at one level we already are.

How good is that? We can rest in a certain hope. That this body. Right? This tangled up in sin body. Will one day be free from the corruption of sin. And be perfect. And this is all God's graciousness towards us.

He does all this for us. Forgiving our sins. Rescuing us from the wrath. Promising us the great hope of living in glory for all eternity. He gives us all things good to us.

He gives those who labour amongst us. He gives his Holy Spirit. He gives his prophetic word. God's grace. Which is to be read to all the brothers. No one's to miss out hearing.

[32 : 02] What God would say to the believers in Thessalonica. And no one should miss out hearing. What God has to say to us here in St. Lucia. So let's listen up.

Let me pray. Our Father in heaven. We thank you for your life giving word. Help us as we hear it. And as we submit to it.

That you'd be at work in us. That we would be a church. A model church. Ringing out the great truths of Christ Jesus.

To each other. And to our suburb here in St. Lucia. And to those that we live with. And in our neighbourhoods. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.