



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V25 N17

April 23, 2023

NOT HOME YET

“Where Honor is Due”

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13a

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Biblical Community

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:44-47



How are church leaders to be treated?

Some leaders are *formal* leaders holding a designated position by appointment; some leaders are *informal* leaders, who do not hold a designated position but emerge as leaders by wielding influence over others who recognize their outstanding skills and abilities—their giftedness. A team's captain is an example of the first; a team's star player is an example of the second.

That the earliest Christian congregations had leaders goes without saying. Acts 13:4-14:28 contains Luke's account of Paul's first missionary journey on which he and Barnabas established churches in Pisidian Antioch in Asia Minor, as well as in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe in the southern area of the Roman province of Galatia (see map in the *NIV Study Bible*, 1851). Luke records that upon leaving Derbe to return home, Paul and Barnabas revisited Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, where they appointed elders for the disciples in each of the churches in each of these cities. The initial leaders responsible for oversight of the church were most likely Jewish converts to Christianity (cf. 13:43, 48; 14:1-2), who came out of the synagogues where they had been taught the Scriptures. “Thus elders from the synagogues became elders in the churches” (Thomas L. Constable, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 392). These were *positional* leaders appointed by Paul and Barnabas. Paul's letter addressed “to the churches in Galatia” (Gal 1:2) is likely the first epistle he wrote—ironically, the term “elder” does not appear in it.

The church Paul and Silas established in Thessalonica on Paul's second missionary journey also had leaders, but they are not identified in terms of the position each held. Instead, they are identified in terms of the ministries they perform. In his first letter, Paul refers to them as “those who *work hard* among you, who *care* for you in the Lord and who *admonish* you” (5:12), which leads one source to note:

“Not much is known about the organization and leadership of the church at this period, but the reference is possibly to elders (cf. Heb 13:7, 17 and notes)” (The *NIV Study Bible* note on 1Th 5:12). This may be a sound inference, given Paul's practice on his first missionary journey. On his return visit to Thessalonica, perhaps Timothy appointed those who were informal leaders already to the formal position of elder. But apart from that inference, the leaders in Thessalonica appear to be people who have emerged as servant leaders by demonstrating their giftedness for doing the ministry (e.g., Jason, Ac 17:5-9). In support of this position, one commentator writes: “It is possible that we are looking in the window at those who emerged as leaders without being formally named to their position, whom the apostle now commends to the congregation” (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 247).

Leadership in contemporary churches is much more complex. Of course, churches have formal *positional* leaders of various types. Take Central Bible Church, for example. Central has formal positional leaders that are *paid* and *unpaid*. The paid positional leaders include the Lead Pastor and Executive Pastor, as well as other pastoral and ministry staff. The unpaid positional leaders include elders, Community Group shepherds and Home Group leaders, not to mention many others who minister as servant leaders filling various roles in student, children's, women's and men's ministry and Central Storehouse. Of course, churches have informal leaders who emerge as such in various contexts by wielding influence over others who recognize their giftedness. These leaders are typically unpaid volunteers who lead by example in many of the ministries above. Whether they be *positional* or *emerging*, paid or unpaid, leaders are indispensable to the accomplishment of the church's mission.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13a

12 Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.

Read in other translations

12 We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. (ESV)

12 Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. 13 Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. (NLT)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "Now" in v. 12.
- Underline "ask you" in v. 12.
- Circle "acknowledge" in v. 12.
- Highlight "who" (3x) in v. 12.
- Circle "work hard," "care for," and "admonish" in v. 12.
- Circle "highest regard" in v. 13.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 13.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What is Paul writing about in verses 12-13a; what is the *subject* of these two verses?
 2. “Now” is omitted from many English translations (e.g., ESV, NLT, GNT). Why include it; what does it con-note?
 3. Paul asks his readers “to acknowledge” and “to hold in highest regard” their leaders. Put what his first request means in your own words.
 4. Put what his second request means in your own words.
 5. Explain where you see room for improvement at your church.
 6. Leaders are defined in terms of three *things they do* rather than three *positions they hold*. Identify the first “who” and explain what it means.
 7. *Identify* the second “who” and *explain* what it means.
 8. *Identify* the third “who” and *explain* what it means.
 9. Explain *why* they are to be held “in the highest regard.”
 10. **Discussion:** Summarize what Paul says about what he is writing about, the *predicate* of these two verses. Put it in a nutshell and talk about why it matters.
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Commentary On The Text

While many English versions leave the Greek word *de* untranslated at the beginning of 1 Thessalonians 5:12, the NIV translates it “Now,” which makes good sense because including it marks the change in Paul’s *subject*—from the coming of the day of the Lord to how they should treat church leaders—and introduces a new section of his letter containing staccato ethical instructions or *parenesis*, serving as a curriculum of sorts for all believers (see Rom 12:1-15:13; Gal 5:13-6:10; 1Th 4:1-12; 5:12-22; Phm 21).

The structure of 5:12-13a is easy to recognize. When it comes to how his readers should behave toward their leaders, Paul asks them (cf. 4:1) to do two things. The two things are expressed by two infinitives (i.e., phrases that begin with “to”). *First*, they are to “acknowledge” them, and *second*, they are to “hold them in the highest regard.” The first is expanded upon in verse 12 and the second in verse 13a.

Regarding the first (v. 12), leaders were not to be overlooked, taken for granted, go unnoticed, or presumed upon. They were to be *acknowledged* as legitimate leaders in the church. And who were these leaders? They were the ones actually doing the ministry. One commentator writes: “Those who should be recognized as leaders and received the apostolic approval were those who did the work. What legitimized this leadership was not their status or social rank, as was commonly the case in both Greek and Roman society, but the labor they understood among the members of the congregation, as the second part of the verse explains” (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 248).

And what ministries were they doing? Paul lists three tasks they were performing. The NIV expresses each in a relative clause (the translation of a Greek participle) that begins with “who,” representing one group of leaders who do three tasks, not three different groups of leaders—so “we should not imagine that our author is thinking of three distinct types of persons” (Green, 248). These leaders were multitaskers! They “work hard” to provide for themselves and to meet the needs of the congregation. Regarding the verb, the same commentator writes: “Over and again it designates ministerial labors (1 Cor. 3.8; 15:58; 2 Cor. 6.5; 11.23, 27; Col. 1.29; 1 Thess. 3.5; and 1 Cor. 15:10; 16.16; Gal. 4:11; Phil. 2.16; Col. 1.9; 1 Tim. 4.10; 5:17) and highlights the fact that true leaders are those who put forth great effort in their work for the benefit of the church” (Green, 249). Doing church ministry is no walk in the park. They “care for” those

they are over, and thus lead by example. They also “care for” members of the congregation. Of the two possible translations “*care for you*” (NIV) and “*over you*” (ESV), the first is preferable for a number of reasons, one being that the surrounding clauses refer to *activities* and not *positions*, another being that just as in Romans 12, “‘giving,’ ‘caring for,’ and ‘showing mercy’ make far more sense contextually than do the ‘giving,’ ‘ruling,’ (as KJV), and ‘showing mercy’ found in most English translations” (Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 205). Doing church ministry takes shepherds! And finally, they “admonish” those who have wandered off the straight and narrow path as in verse 14: “warn those who are idle and disruptive.” Doing church ministry takes courage and a thick skin!

Regarding the second (v. 13a), leaders were to be held “in the highest regard.” Doing so implied that congregants would be loyal to them and submit to their leadership—not blindly but out of respect. This does not mean that leaders should be granted some elevated status or that they should be exalted in the eyes of those they serve by their vestments. As the same commentator writes: “The leaders are protected from any form of people’s ‘fawning’ over them by the modifier ‘in love,’ which eliminates the option of thinking more highly of their leaders than they Christianly ought to . . . And the reason they are to hold them in such high regard is not because of their position, but ‘because of their work’” (Fee, 207). Paul’s two prepositional phrases “in love” (*en agapē*) and “because of their work” (*dia to ergon autōn*) express both the *manner* and the *motivation* behind his command. The instructions Paul gives in verse 12 do not necessarily imply that the Thessalonian believers were not doing what he asked and so they needed to be corrected. It’s risky to infer that problems existed in the church just because the apostle gives these instructions. However, the church is like an extended family in which complex interpersonal relationships abound. So it’s not hard to believe that the apostle would anticipate that following his instructions might create tension between various congregants. This may explain why he exhorts his readers to “Live in peace with each other” (v. 13b).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 12 *Now* Gk. *de* ("now") not *peri de* ("now concerning") as in 4:9, 13; 5:1. "In v. 12 Paul directs the reader's attention to a new theme with the discourse marker 'and now' (*de*)" — he had been speaking in 5:1-11 about how Christians should live as children of light before the coming of the day of the Lord — "Now he gives more general direction or *paraenesis*, with no direct reference to eschatology" (Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, vol. 13, ZECNT, 218). Sandwiched in between the body and the closing of many of Paul's letters is a section containing "ethical, edifying material, often associated with moral instruction or preaching" or *paraenesis* (see William G. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, 37-39, 83). Similar ethical instruction in four of Paul's letters (Rom 12:1-15:13; Gal 5:13-6:10; 1Th 4:1-12; 5:12-22; Phm 21) suggests it amounted to a basic curriculum for Christian living that he taught to all believers.

v. 12 *we ask you* "And we urge you" (v. 14); cf. 4:1. "What follows is not simply a polite request but rather a strong exhortation concerning how the church should respond to its new leadership. We ask is the same verb that appears in 4.1 and means 'to beseech' or 'to entreat.' In this paragraph, as there, it is combined with 'we urge' or 'we exhort' (v. 14)" (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 248).

v. 12 *acknowledge* "The request ('we ask you') is that they 'know' those who have responsibility for them in the Lord. As in English the verb 'know' in Greek has a considerable range of meaning. Here Paul most likely intended the nuance indicated by the TNIV's [and NIV's] 'acknowledge.' That is, the believers are to 'know' them in the sense that they recognize or acknowledge their activities of leadership among them. Most likely it is simply Paul's way of *affirming the leadership* of those responsible for carrying out the various instructions in this letter, since the one real corrective involved has to do with the unruly-idle" (Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 204, italics added).

v. 12 *work hard* "Paul used the same word to describe the strenuous physical labor required to support himself materially (2:9; cf. 1 Cor 4:12) and of his spiritual ministry in their midst (3:5; cf. Phil 2:16). The term indicates strenuous labor. At the same time it is broad enough to include all sorts

of ministry activity" (D. Michael Martin, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, NAC, 172). "These were men who worked **hard** to provide pastoral care for the flock, probably in their spare time since in the early church local church leaders often carried fulltime jobs outside the church" (Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 707).

v. 12 *care for* Cf. "over you" (ESV); "preside over you" (NET). "'Those who are over you' translates a compound word that literally means 'to stand before' (*proistēmi*). Various metaphorical meanings derived from this. The verb might describe one who 'surpassed others,' who 'presided over' or 'directed' others, who 'represented' others, or who 'protected' and thus 'cared for' others. In general it does not depict an office but a task. The 'one who stands before you' in Paul's letters is both a leader and a caregiver' (Martin, 172). "The verb [*proistasthai*] combines the ideas of leading, protecting and caring for (cf. Reicke, 700)" (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 119). Gordon D. Fee argues at great length for the nuance "care for" in the NIV (205-206).

v. 12 *admonish* BDAG, *noutheteō* has "to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct." "Admonishing is correction administered either by word or deed. It implies blame on the part of the one admonished" (Robert L. Thomas, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, 288). "An author would not employ this word to describe the task of imparting information, though it might be linked with teaching (Col. 1.28), but would rather take it up to point to giving advice and correction designed to change the conduct of a person (5.14; 2 Thess. 3.15)" (Green, 250).

v. 13 *highest regard* Cf. "esteem" (ESV; cf. NET); "show them a lot of respect" (NLT). "The verb normally signifies 'to think' or 'to consider' (2 Cor. 9.5; Phil. 2.25; 3.8; 2 Pet. 1.13) . . . The combination of this verb 'consider' with the adverb 'quite beyond all measure' (*hyperekperissou*) yields the sense reflected in the NIV. The Thessalonians should think about them in the highest way possible, and so *hold them in highest regard*. They should not only recognize the leaders among them but also respect them greatly. This esteem is expressed in love (cf. Eph. 4.2, 15-16)" (Green, 250-51).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Acknowledge the leaders among you, who serve you tirelessly,
by regarding them highly and cooperating with their leadership.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

In an early episode of *SpongeBob SquarePants*, Patrick Star tries to help SpongeBob look fancy when he goes for tea at Sandy Cheeks' house. Patrick tells SpongeBob, "When in doubt, pinkies out." Our kids live in a culture where everybody's living "pinkies out." They're trying to look a little fancier than they really are and their heroes are celebrities and social media influencers. Even our youngest kids feel that in order to be liked they need to mimic the name brand clothes, latest hairstyle and most updated technology and social media trends that change in the blink of an eye. Honestly, they may have learned this from us, their parents. How many of us look to Instagram or TikTok reels to stay up to date and relevant? Unfortunately, the people we admire and strive to mimic in this world aren't always admirable. Paul says to hold in high regard hard workers, people who offer care to others and love you enough to call you out and point you in the right direction. People on the other side of the screen just can't fill this role and don't have much to offer in terms of engaging relationships. But our community has everything we need for model behavior. Who do you admire? Who do you know that works diligently for the Lord without regard to promotion or pay? Who is the first to step up to care for the needs of others? Who has the courage to call you out when you drift from the Lord? Those are the people we need to be engaging with. Let's seek deeper relationships with those admirable people!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13a.

1. In this passage, who is Paul speaking to? Who is he speaking about?
2. What three personal qualities does Paul mention about these people?
3. How should you think about a person with these qualities?

What Do You Think?

What does it mean to hold someone in high regard?

What Do You Do?

Who is a someone you know with a good work ethic, or a person who exhibits qualities of care and love that you admire? Draw a comic strip featuring your hero in action and give it to that person.

CORE COMPETENCY: Biblical Community

I spend time with other Christians to help with God's work.

MEMORY VERSE: Romans 15:13

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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