

# A Practical Study of 1 Thessalonians

## Delighting The Heart of God “Learning to Bring Pleasure to God”

### Question Number Eleven – Have You Tried This? – 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

You know you go to the doctor to have a check-up and then after you get checked-up you find out where you're deficient with certain kinds of things or chemistry or disease or problems. And then he always ends up giving you something that's going to cost you a whole bunch at the drug store. And that's your prescription.

The thing I love about 1 Thessalonians is that in these verses, we're going to see Dr. Paul issuing a 15 point prescription for living the victorious Christian life.

If these things are true in your life, you're on top of it spiritually and you're really growing and moving ahead.

It was William Barclay in his little study Bible who said:

“Paul comes to an end with a chain of jewels of good advice.”  
(source unknown)

And if you took all of the commands here in chapter 5, you'd end up with twenty-five of them. But I am breaking at verses

23-28 to wrap up the evening study with something else that I want to share with you. And we'll look at just the 20 of them in making our SPIRITUAL CHECK-UP.

Last time, just as we finished, we read this verse:

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore be encouraging one another, and be building one another up, one the other even as also you are doing.

So we could put down command #4 in Paul's prescription is:

COMMAND #4:

“be encouraging one another”

And secondly:

COMMAND #5:

“be building one another up”

Those are your last two in the passage that we had last time.

Now the little word “be” is the KEY WORD in the passage. You always know when Paul is using that, he's exhorting or giving commands to help bring about a solution. And that little word “be” is going to occur 15 TIMES in these verses as we chase through there. And it'll help us to get a handle on

the argument of the passage.

It's like he's been addressing the real problems in chapter 4 and through chapter 5 verse 11. And now as we pick up the passage, he's giving a whole series of exhortations to help to solve the problems that are there in Thessalonica.

And may I say, these things will solve your problems too if you start living what they say.

If you got serious about this and put this on your mirror so you had to meet it every morning, I tell you, it's going to do some things in your life because it addresses just about every major issue and will give you a guideline in just a simple phrase as to what you need to be doing in your life.

Verse 12.

**v. 12 Now we are asking you, brethren, to know (recognize) those who are toiling among you, and those who are in authority over you in the Lord and those who are exhorting you,**

“Now”—what do we got there? There it is again. You see that's the beginning of this section.

“Now we are asking you, brethren, to know (or to recognize) those who are toiling among you, and those who are in authority over you in the Lord and those who are exhorting you,”

So COMMAND #6 is:

“we are asking you, brethren, to know (or recognize) those who are toiling among you.”

What Paul is saying is that if you're going to be a happy believer, you're going to learn the lesson of recognizing the chains of authority.

One of the hardest things in the world, even in the Christian community, is to find folks who are willing to submit themselves to the authority as it is established and to live comfortably under that authority.

Almost all of the emotional energy and almost all of the struggles that you have in the church boil down to people who just can't live under authority. They can't get along, they've got to be an authority unto themselves. And wherever they go they wreak havoc in the body of Christ.

Third John 9 is a great illustration of that. Diotrephes, who loved to be first, was the one who was always calling the shots.

Now he characterizes authority here by saying:

they are “toiling among you,”

they are “in authority over you,” and

they're there to be "exhorting you."

That's the function in spiritual leadership.

They're to be SERVANTS by the fact that they're "toiling."

They do have the divine "authority over you" in the body of Christ.

And it is their place and their responsibility to be "exhorting you" in the Scriptures.

### Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

That word "to recognize" means, if you wanted to put it in another way, the Greek word could be "to appreciate" or "to value" those who have been called by God in the realm of leadership.

Now each of you men sitting here have got different tiers of leadership.

You're either the leader of a bunch of employees or you are an employee under authority.

And the same thing is true in the church. You've got to learn to discern the chains of authority and where you fit in that.

And then all of you men have the responsibility of leadership in your own home. You are to be the leader of your family. God put you there as the head of the house.

I was reading Dennis Rainey's book *Lonely Husbands, Lonely Wives* and he says this:

*(Lonely Husbands, Lonely Wives: Rekindling Intimacy in Every Marriage by Dennis Rainey)*

Headship means leading, loving, and serving, not demanding, dominating, or demeaning.

p. 138

“He who thinketh he leadeth and turneth around to find no one following, is merely taking a walk.” – Benjamin Hooks  
p. 139 (source unknown)

I love that. You know that's an awful good statement for us to recognize that as men we've got these different tiers of authority.

And you know with that also goes a certain realm of isolation. Because when you take that position of leadership, you're always going to have those experiences of loneliness simply because you have been endowed by your Creator with the

authority and the responsibility. But those are the times that God can speak to you the most and can help you get your priorities straight and help you to be a good servant for Jesus' sake.

So in this sixth command he's saying basically, respect the leadership and this is a reflection of your relationship to the Lord.

All it means is that you realize the authority—don't criticize it, don't fight it, don't try to tear it apart. But for God's sake, submit to it.

And this is the premise that I'm coming to. Is it possible that your relationship to authority on the horizontal is only an indication of your relationship to authority on the vertical?

When a guy isn't very comfortable and hasn't learned how to submit to his Lord, who is his ultimate authority, it's probably going to show up on this level.

Now see what he says in verse 13?

**v. 13 and be respecting them very highly in love for their work. Be at peace among yourselves.**

“and be respecting them very highly in love for their work. Be at peace among yourselves.”

Command #7 also has to do with authority.

## Command #7:

“be respecting them”—don’t only recognize them, but respect them—“very highly in love for their work.

They’re toiling, they’re “in authority,” they’re having the right “to exhort,” and it’s the responsibility of the happy believer to learn how to “be respecting very highly in love for their work.”

I got kind of tickled about this little deal that happened in a church in Mississippi. They wanted to encourage their pastor and so they were going to put a special article in the church newsletter.

The author of the paragraph entitled it, “Boost the Pastor.” [“Boost the Pastor a Bit” was the full title of the article.] The article was sent to the print shop, and a young typesetter went to work on it. When he got finished, it appeared in the weekly church paper with this headline: “Boot the Pastor a Bit.” We smile at this simple error, but unfortunately some people do feel that way about their minister.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

And this is what happens.

I was reading this little story—it helped me—in *Daily Bread* one morning. It says:



In his fascinating book *When the Saints Come Storming In*, [I like the title already] Leslie B. Flynn included this story. “A farmer asked a restaurant owner if he could use a million frog legs. Desirous of putting frog legs on the menu more frequently, the owner asked the farmer where he could get so many. He replied, ‘My pond is overflowing with them. Their croaking is driving me up the wall.’ The restaurateur ordered several hundred frogs. A week later the farmer returned to the restaurant with a sheepish look on his face. ‘I was wrong about a million frogs.’ Holding up two scrawny frogs, he admitted, ‘These two little frogs were making all the racket. I never knew two frogs could sound like a million!’”

(From *Our Daily Bread*, February 18, year unknown)

You know, and that’s really the case when you’ve got somebody who’s a squeaky wheel. You know they can just make more havoc in a situation than we care to even talk about. And many, many people in life spend all their live at the complaint counter. I mean that’s their call to ministry is just to criticize and complain and they think they’re so spiritual with that. And it is not.

Now what are the first two things—commands 6 and 7?

You know “recognize the authority” and then “respect” it.

Not only RECOGNIZE it, but RESPECT it in the sense that you’re submitting to it.

And that's going to make you happy.

Isn't that neat that you discover right at the top of the study today that when you are encouraging and edifying, you're living in humility. And in order to do that, you've got to be a person who recognizes the authority over you. And as a result of recognizing, you respect it.

And I tell you, there's nothing more wonderful then when you've got a bunch of believers who are all pulling together. And they're really eager and excited to see what God's going to do.

Command #8 comes right after that.

Command #8:

“Be at peace among yourselves.”

Now “peace” is a fruitage of the Spirit.

Peace is what happens when you come to know Jesus Christ.

And that peace ought to pervade our lives. But you see, peace can't come as long as you've got tension in these other areas.

I love Isaiah 32:17. One of my very favorite verses in the Old Testament:

Isaiah 32:17

The work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

And so I ascertain my relationship and I recognize that when there's fighting and quarrelling and bickering, as so often is the case, then there is not peace and somebody is living in the flesh.

Luke 22:31 and 32 shows you how Satan does that:

### Luke 22:31, 32

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, may strengthen your brethren.

You know Satan gets in there and he just throws sand in the works and in the wheels and he is going to do everything he possibly can to destroy the unity among brothers and sisters in Christ. Whether it's a critical spirit, it's an arrogant spirit, it's a resistant spirit—whatever it is—he'll do everything he can to accomplish that and the Lord recognized that.

Verse 4.

**v. 14 Now we are urging you, brethren, to be admonishing the lazy (idle), be encouraging the**

**discouraged, be paying attention to those who are weak, be patient toward all.**

“Now we are urging you, brethren, to be admonishing the lazy (or the idle), be encouraging the discouraged, be paying attention to those who are weak, be patient toward all.”

Command #9:

“Now we are urging you, brethren, to be admonishing the lazy (or the idle),”

Now why does he have to say that?

Back in chapter 4, verse 11 we read yesterday:

1 Thessalonians 4:11

and to make it your ambition to live quietly and to busy yourselves with your own affairs and to work with your hands, even as we commanded you;

We already have learned that a lot of people thought that the Lord was coming immediately so they quit their jobs and they were going to idle on into the Kingdom. And so they kind of left their ranks is what the word “lazy” or “idle” means. They aren’t working. There is a soldier who’s sitting down on the job.

I’m reminded of that humorous little story:

After a thorough physical examination, a man said, “Tell me in plain language, Doc, what’s really the matter with me?” “Do you want it straight?” [says the doctor] “Yes.” “Well, there isn’t a thing in the world wrong with you except that you’re just plain lazy!” “Okay,” drawled the listless patient, “now give me the medical term for it so I can tell my wife!”

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

You know, I mean, want to try to get it across some way.

You know, the ironic thing is that Satan is in the business of using idle hands.

When you are idle is the time that you’re going to be in the biggest trouble. If you don’t think so, just go talk to David. And when he should have been out on the field of battle in 1 Samuel or 2 Samuel 11, he’s on the roof lounging around and sending everybody else out to the field of battle. And at that moment is the critical time that Satan picks up and does a number.

I’ve got a little premise and I think it’s true. Satan has a tough time hitting a moving target. You know. And when you’re moving and when you’re consumed with ministry and activity and you’re accomplishing with a passion what God has for you, it’s tougher for him to hit you. So you keep going and you keep doing it!

When did Joseph get it? When he was in the house by himself and Potiphar's wife didn't have anything to do but think about those things. And as a result, it almost ended in Joseph's demise if he hadn't gotten out of the place.

And such is the case in almost every sin. When Satan wants to accomplish something, he looks for idle hands to accomplish his purpose.

Now heavy rain had been falling for a long time and as a man drove down a lonely road, he rounded a curve and he saw an old farmer surveying the ruins of his barn. The driver stopped his car and asked what had happened. "Roof fell in," said the farmer. "Leaked so long it finally just rotted through." "Why in the world didn't you fix it before it got that bad?" asked the stranger. "Well, sir," replied the farmer, "it just seemed I never did get around to it. When the weather was good, there weren't no need for it, and when it rained, it was too wet to work on!"

(paraphrased from InfoSearch 3.0)

You know, some people have got those kind of excuses all the time.

And you know I find that same thing true in the devotional life. We'll get in the Word when it's convenient.

And I'll say I've found that same thing true in exercise too. You've got people—it's amazing if you've been around any

health clubs right after the first of the year. It's so funny. I mean it's crowded. You've got to wait in line. Get your towels. Get your lockers.

But you hang around there until March 1st and you know you're just like you're in a monastery. You're coming down there working out if you've made it that long. It's the name of the game.

We are so slothful and sleazy with regard to consistency in our lives in this regard.

And may God cause you, if you've become inconsistent. And if you think that's godliness, then get your act together and realize the Christian life is compressed into daily increments.

And I've told so many people this:

Life by the inch is a cinch and by the yard it is hard!

I've got a little statement right over my computer on my desk that says:

Live one day at a time.

Give us this day our daily bread.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross DAILY and follow me.

You can't live the whole thing at once but you can live one day at a time.

Decide when you've got to get up to get your exercising done and your devotional time done, your time with your wife and your family, and then get up and do it! And don't sit around apologizing for the fact that you don't have enough time to get it done.

I mean it's time to get tough with each other! We've got people sleazing around with lazy hands and doing nothing significant for the Kingdom of God. And it's simply because they're saying "Oh I'm going to get around to it one of these days but it's raining today and tomorrow it's sun shining so I don't need to do it." And pretty soon the roof's going to fall in because it's going to rot through.

You know that's the picture of so many who claim to be living the Christian life but they're sitting around on their duff doing nothing.

Command #9:

"be admonishing the lazy (or the idle),"

Command #10:

"be encouraging the discouraged."

Now there's a whole list of words for "discouraged" that could



be [a] possibility:

the fainthearted,

the little souled,

the feeble-minded,

the wavering,

the weak ones,

those who have been hit by temptation or obstacles or bereavements.

I really think I prefer that. I think I prefer those who've been bereaved. These are people that are discouraged because they've lost part of their family in the persecution.

And he's saying come alongside and "encourage the discouraged" because they've lost loved ones in the persecution or some other thing has been real tragic in their lives. And the Scripture teaches us that we're to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

And one of Satan's number one tools is the tool of discouragement. Get people that just can't keep on going on. And in every community there are those who fear the worst and who hurt so badly inside and they just need some words of tenderness.

I'll give you a few verses on that. First Chronicles 28:20—I'm trying to memorize this one too. I've been working on it for a long time.

### 1 Chronicles 28:20

David also said to Solomon his son, “Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished.

What a great statement for a dad who's getting ready to die to give to his son who's going to take over the responsibilities.

### 2 Corinthians 4:1

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,

### 2 Corinthians 4:16

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day.

The apostle is speaking on the power of encouraging those who really would just as soon throw in the towel. They're tired, they're ready to quit.

Command #11:

“be paying attention to those who are weak.”

“Now we are urging you, brethren, to be admonishing the lazy (and the idle), be encouraging the discouraged” BUT—

Command #11:

“be paying attention to those who are weak.”

Now what's the difference between command #10 and command #11?

Command #10 we're talking about some EXTERNAL thing that's happened to the person and caused him to be discouraged. Maybe he's lost his job, maybe he's a person that's experienced physical death in his family. That's one side.

But what does it mean “paying attention to those who are weak”?

I'm going to say at this point, I think is Romans 14.

In Romans 14 Paul contrasts Christian brothers and sisters in two ways. They're either STRONG or they're WEAK.

Now the strong person is a person who's come to know Christ, he's entered into the freedom that's his in Christ, and everything's lawful to him. He doesn't have any problem

walking into a cocktail party with some folks and feel comfortable.

But then you've got the legalistic brother over here on the other side that Paul characterizes as weak. And to this person if he walked in there, he would feel defiled and he would be so upset that he'd been caught in that he'd probably spend the next week confessing his sin. That's the difference.

Now Paul identifies himself with the **STRONG** brethren. He says "we who are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak."

And so in Romans 14 he talks a great deal about that and the responsibility of the stronger brother to the weaker brother.

Now let's take that right back to the early church so you can understand it. You've got the Jewish Christians. They've been living by the Law and they have certain stringent Laws and requirements to live by.

When they became a Christian you just didn't wipe out that past. And so when they become a Christian they have a very fine-tuned sensitivity toward these things.

Alright here's a Gentile from Thessalonica. He's been messing around up at the temple with the prostitutes and he's been tipping it with the boys at the bar and he's been cussing with the best of them down in the harbor. And his life is reprobate.

He comes into the family of God and he has none of this background. And when he becomes a Christian it's the most wonderful thing in all the world.

It's John Newton singing "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost and now I'm found, was blind but now I see!"

He's just blown away by the grace of God!

But when he's coming into the body of Christ, he doesn't have any of this background. And the Spirit of God has not had time yet to really work in this area of his life.

Now the problem with the weaker brother, he can come over here and he can just stifle the dickens out of this guy by trying to pour all of his legalistic requirements on this guy and it's going to rain on his parade and get him so discouraged he's going to think "What in the world have I got into? I can't have any fun anymore!" And he "PHSSS!" folds up and dies.

What Paul says is, when you come into the body of Christ you ought to bear with one another. And especially the weaker brother because he's got a very sensitive, tender conscience.

And Paul says "I can do anything. All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient because I've a responsibility to these weaker brethren to be sensitive because if they go ahead and do it, even though they have doubt about it, it makes them sin." And that's serious when you're making a weaker

brother sin.

So “be paying attention to those who are weak” that have a different orientation when they come into the body of Christ. You’ve got a responsibility—Philippians chapter 2—not to look on your own things but also on the things of others and be sensitive to their needs.

Command #12:

“be patient toward all [men].”

That means don’t lose your temper. Just endure and be patient.

I always remember Bill Gothard’s little pin:

“Please be patient, God is not finished with me yet.”  
(source unknown)

We all come on different tracks. We’re all at different levels. God help us rather than be critical, to be patient.

I love the way Phillips translates:

1 Corinthians 13:4

This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience. It looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive. It is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated

ideas of its own importance.

Verse 15.

**v. 15 Be seeing to it that no one gives back evil for evil to anyone, but always be pursuing the good for one another and for all.**

“Be seeing to it that no one gives back evil for evil to anyone, but always be pursuing the good for one another and for all.”

Command #13:

“Be seeing to it that no one gives back evil for evil to anyone.”

Listen to this, what he says here:

Romans 12:19-21 (Phillips translation)

Never take vengeance into your own hands, my dear friends, stand back and let God punish if He will, for it is written, “Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense,” and these are God’s words. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirsts, give him to drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.” Do not allow yourself to be overpowered with evil, take the offensive, overpower evil by good.

You know one of the things I think you need to realize that by

human nature we always want to set the record straight. And when you've got that attitude in your heart and you don't let go of that stuff, it's going to become a root of bitterness—Hebrews chapter 12—that's going to spoil a whole lot of people.

And you need to examine your heart today in regard to that.

First Corinthians 13:5 and 6 says:

### 1 Corinthians 13:5, 6

[Love] does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own; it is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

You know, and if you've got those feelings inside and they continue to fester, you're going to spoil an awful lot of people.

I've been working for almost a year with a couple to save their marriage. And God in His marvelous grace has reached down and He saved that marriage. It is a beautiful experience to be used by God to help those two get back together again.

But I got a call here not too long ago where the wife wants to call the church of the other person and try to get real judgment taken care of. And I've been working in the situation trying to help in those circumstances. And I just pled. I said "You will reverse everything that has been done if you just



cannot forgive and let go.”

We have had victory after victory after victory. It was just like Satan was trying to throw the wrench in setting the record straight.

Please, it isn't worth it. You'll never get it straight before you get to Glory anyway. And the best thing to do is to get rid of it.

I read Aeschliman's book *Cages of Pain*. He says:

(*Cages of Pain* by Gordon Aeschliman)

Bitterness is the deadly virus of the soul.

It enters our system through the betrayal of others and then is left to accomplish its destructive work long after the violator has moved out of our immediate life. It is in this regard the cruelest of all pain, because it is effective to remind us each moment of our waking hours that we are the worthless playground of others' exploits, and it lingers to destroy us bit by bit—rather than with the swift and decisive swoosh of the guillotine.

First the emotions are ravaged, then the energy is drained, next the hatred mounts, and the soul is poisoned by its need for revenge. Finally the spirit is suffocated: Bitterness has achieved its master's work.

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J. W. Moore in his book *Yes, Lord, I Have Sinned*, but I've got a lot of excellent excuses said:

*(Yes, Lord, I Have Sinned, But I Have Several Excellent Excuses* by James W. Moore)

Remember how Archie Bunker put it: “What’s wrong with revenge? It’s the perfect way to get even.” And I remember the story about two little boys who got into a fight on the schoolground. When the teacher went out to break it up, one little boy said, “He started it when he hit me back!”  
p. 16

You know I mean, that’s really the beginning.

Then he goes on and he says this, and I thought this gives you a real good illustration of what’s going on:

*(Yes, Lord, I Have Sinned, But I Have Several Excellent Excuses* by James W. Moore)

Some years ago, our family went away for a short trip. We were gone for only three days, but while we were out of town, the electricity went off. We had a turkey in the freezer section of our refrigerator, and when we returned and opened the door into the kitchen, we knew immediately what had happened. That turkey had spoiled, and the horrible odor had permeated everything. We had to throw away everything in the refrigerator—even the ice-cube trays. The stench of that spoiled turkey saturated everything.

I thought to myself, resentment is like that in our souls. It literally permeates the spirit and poisons the soul.

p. 59

Have you ever wondered why some people are so short? And why they are so quick like that? It's almost like they're under control of a bitter spirit. And they just can't function with a freedom of love and goodness and sensitivity and kindness.

Nobody was better at giving sharp remarks and cutting people down than Winston Churchill. And he certainly had no love affair with Lady Astor.

(Simple Faith by Charles R. Swindoll)

Actually, the feeling was mutual. It's reported that on one occasion she found the great statesman rather obviously inebriated in a hotel elevator. With cutting disgust she snipped, "Sir Winston, you are drunk!" to which he replied, "M'lady, you are *ugly*. And tomorrow I will be sober."

pp. 101-2

Strong stuff.

You know Lewis Smedes has written a whole bunch of books and you need to read *Forgive and Forget* or *Hitting For the Hurts that We Don't Deserve* if you haven't read anything that deals with getting rid of this stuff that is your life. And then *Healing For Damaged Emotions*, too, is another excellent book that talks about forgiveness.

But listen to Lewis Smedes here:

*(A Pretty Good Person: What It Takes to Live with Courage, Gratitude and Integrity* by Lewis B. Smedes)

Why do we hang on to it? For one reason, nothing on earth makes us feel more virtuous than remembered wrongs. Or gives us such perverse pleasure. Homer, the ancient Greek poet, noticed how it “rises within our soul and becomes in our madness a thing more sweet than the dripping of honey.” Hate is the soul’s cocaine; it gives us a sweet high, but sooner or later it brings us low.

p. 106

And yet William Walton said:

“To carry a grudge is like being stung to death by one bee at a time.”

(source unknown)

And to allow that stuff to go on is going to destroy your happiness and your orientation.

Command #14:

“be pursuing the good for one another and for all.”

I don’t have to explain that.

Philippians 2:3 and 4 are good.

Do you have enough sensitivity in your heart to do things for others when it's going to cost you something?

Well listen to what Kent Hughes says about this “pursing the good of one another and for all.” I thought this was so good.

*(Disciplines of a Godly Man by R. Kent Hughes)*

Along with this, the [he calls it] discipline of deference must be carefully practiced [by the disciplined man]. Many men never forego a planned pleasure for the sake of their wives. [Quit preaching and gone to meddlin'] For some men, golf is synonymous to Dante's *Paradiso*, but the entrance to a department store is like the gates of Dante's Hell, bearing the inscription: “Abandon all hope all ye who enter here.” But if you love your wife, there must be times when you forsake the heavenly greens because you value her interests and simply love her.

p. 44

And then he puts it this way:

*(Disciplines of a Godly Man by R. Kent Hughes)*

Lastly, I must mention the discipline of time and romance. Years ago, in the Midwest, a farmer and his wife were lying in bed during a storm when the funnel of a tornado suddenly lifted the roof right off the house and sucked their bed away with them still in it. The wife began to cry, and the farmer called to her that it was no time to cry. She called back that

she was so happy, she could not help it—it was the first time they had been out together in twenty years!

p. 44

Oh tragically true too many times isn't it?

Now the next three verses are just loaded with bear.

I want you to note verses 16, 17 and 18.

This is the trilogy of dynamic Christian living and it's all the PRESENT TENSE. It just makes my flesh turn goosebumps I get so excited about it.

This is PRESENT TENSE stuff.

### **v. 16 Always be rejoicing;**

Command #15:

“Always be rejoicing;”

### **Philippians 4:4**

Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I will say, rejoice!

Now do you want a little technical thing that you can use on somebody when they ask what the shortest verse in the Bible is?

When people ask you what the shortest verse in the Bible is, you always say John 11:30: “Jesus wept.” Right?

Wrong.

This is the shortest verse in the Bible. It takes less Greek letters to write “always be rejoicing” because it’s all just ONE WORD, than it does to put down “Jesus wept.”

So next time they do that, you know you can say “Yep! First Thessalonians 5:16 in the Greek text because I’m a real student! Boy!” Woo! You’ll score some points right there.

“always be rejoicing;”

How can you do that?

George Mueller gives us the key:

I never allow myself to begin a day without facing before God anything that has left me unhappy or distressed because I want to be before Him always in the spirit of joyfulness.  
(source unknown)

Dealing with what’s gone on before so he can be “rejoicing” in Him.

**v. 17 unceasingly be praying;**

“unceasingly be praying;”

That's command #16.

And here 1 Thessalonians 3:10 says:

### 1 Thessalonians 3:10

night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?

Continual communion is the key. It doesn't mean that you're on your knees all the time. But if you have a running conversation with the Lord, you have a great joy.

You know it's just like Peter, James and John. They wanted to build three tabernacles and stay on the mountain, you know after Christ had been transfigured. And that's the way we feel inside. We'd like to just stay here. But God is going to move us into the valley of need. But get that communion set up so that you can carry that with you and keep it and be sensitive to that which offends Him and deal with it quickly in your life.

Spurgeon said:

When joy and prayer are married, their firstborn child is gratitude. Long as they live most Christians pray for only while they pray, they live.  
(source unknown)



That's the word for a hacking cough. You know like when you have a tickle in your throat, you always have the urge to cough. You always ought to have the urge to pray. You ought to always feel inside. You can just stop for a minute while you are at the stop light and you can talk to the Father. And you just lay these things before Him.

Number 18 is such a critical verse and I want to say that the translation of the very first word in the verse is the secret to the whole thing. It is the word "in" NOT "for."

**v. 18 in everything be giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

"in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

It doesn't say "for everything give thanks."

It's almost like some people think they express their spirituality by saying "Praise the Lord! I have cancer."

You know, it's like I've got to rise above what everybody else does to show that I'm spiritual. No!

If God has allowed it—and He's sovereign and we know that—and you're in it, it's part of the curriculum to make you more Christlike. So "give thanks" for the tools that He's using to bring about Christlikeness. That's all that's teaching you.

And you're supposed to be doing it all the time:

“in everything [PRESENT TENSE] be giving thanks;”

And then he expresses it by a REASON:

“for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

An unknown poet writes these words:

“Circumstances! How we pet them; how we give them right of way! But the Master never planned that we should fall beneath their sway. Paul made circumstances serve him, made them glorify his Lord; turned each trial into blessing as he boldly preached the Word. ‘These things turned to my advantage,’ this old warrior oft would say. ‘For our good they work together,’ though they seem to shroud the day.”

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

“IN everything be giving thanks.”

Now put those three together. Isn't that great?

“always be rejoicing,”

“unceasingly be praying,” and

“in everything be giving thanks.”

A Christian who's got it together is happy, praying and thankful—basically—as you try to summarize those three marks of a real Christian.

Now, Habakkuk 3:17-19 is a beautiful demonstration of what we're talking about—this whole attitude of thanksgiving. Listen to these words:

### Habakkuk 3:17-19

Though the fig tree does not bud  
and there are no grapes on the vines,  
the olive crop all fails  
and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the pen  
and no cattle in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the Lord,  
I will be joyful in God my Savior.  
[And then listen to this]  
The Sovereign Lord is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the hinds feet,  
He enables me to go on to the heights.

That's the end of that wonderful book where Habakkuk is fighting against God's permission and God's plan and all of a sudden, he comes to the realization "I've just got to give thanks where I am, no matter what, trusting God to work."

Verse 19.

## **v. 19 Stop stifling the Spirit;**

“Stop stifling the Spirit;”

In other words, don't quench the Spirit. Don't put out the fire of the Spirit. Don't throw water on the Spirit as He's working in your life. Be free.

Now you can do **THREE THINGS** to the Holy Spirit.

1. If you're not a Christian, you can **RESIST** the Holy Spirit

And that's Acts 7:51. Stephen said to those guys just before he died: “You always resist the Holy Spirit.”

2. Or you could be sitting here **GRIEVING** the Holy Spirit—Ephesians 4:30—by sin in your life. He is the Holy Spirit.

And thirdly:

3. You can be **QUENCHING** the Holy Spirit.

You can stifle His work.

I think one of the most graphic illustrations of stifling the Spirit is when Paul was talking to Felix and Drusilla in Acts 24:24. Listen to these words:

Acts 24:24, 25

Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, and when I find time, I’m going to summon you.”

In other words, he started getting shaky a little bit. When the Word started hitting him and he knew he was going to be judged for his life and made accountable, and as a result of that he said “just get away!”

Stifling the ministry of the Spirit of God within our lives.

How else do we stifle the Holy Spirit?

Some Christians stifle the Holy Spirit by the fact that they could never laugh. They just don’t think that laughter is sacred. And that when Christians laugh, it’s almost like they’re living in the flesh.

Now Barbara Johnson doesn’t believe that. She says:

*(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life by Barbara Johnson)*

OUR FIVE SENSES ARE INCOMPLETE WITHOUT  
THE SIXTY—A SENSE OF HUMOR.

p. 109

And then she says this—you poor ladies. Wait till you hear

this:

*(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life by Barbara Johnson)*

HAPPY IS THE WOMAN WHO CAN LAUGH AT  
HERSELF; SHE WILL NEVER CEASE TO BE AMUSED.  
p. 110

[Oh man, what a deal.]

I believe that if we can divide our problems into those that can be solved quickly and those that cannot, we will have come a long way toward relaxing when confronted with things that we cannot change. Humor is God's weapon against worry, anxiety, and fear. Remember that:

FEAR IS THE DARKROOM  
WHERE NEGATIVES ARE DEVELOPED.  
p. 110

There are many reasons to laugh, so go ahead. Since it takes forty-three muscles to frown but only seventeen muscles to smile, why not conserve energy? Keep this in mind:

AN OPTIMIST LAUGHS TO FORGET;  
THE PESSIMIST FORGETS TO LAUGH.  
p. 111

Don't stifle the Spirit.

Verse 20.

**v. 20 stop rejecting with contempt prophesyings.**

“stop rejecting with contempt prophesyings.”

That's Command #17.

During those days, the Word of God wasn't complete. And a man could stand up and be speaking the message of God to the congregation. They're saying don't reject that!

Now we don't have that today. The Book is complete. There's nobody prophesying. The prophets are done. The divine revelation is complete. Now we only expound the truth of the Word of God.

I'll hasten on and end because I realize you've already finished listening.

Verse 21.

**v. 21 But be putting all things to the test, and holding fast the good;**

“But be putting all things to the test, and holding fast to the good;”

Command #18:

“But be putting all things to the test,”

That’s because, like Acts 17:11, the Bereans were searching the Scriptures to see if these things were so.

### 1 John 4:1

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits ...

Be careful.

Command #19:

“[be] holding fast to that which good;”

### Hebrews 6:19

we have an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast within the veil,

And the last one—verse 22—you didn’t think we’d ever make it.

**v. 22 be abstaining from every form (kind) of evil.**

Command #20:

“be abstaining from every form (or kind) of evil.”

The last one of course is obvious because:



“God”—1 Thessalonians 4:7—“called us not to uncleanness, but in holiness.”

Somebody put it this way:

All the water in the world,  
However hard it tried,  
Could never, never sink a ship  
Unless it got inside.

All the evil in the world,  
The wickedness and sin,  
Can never sink your soul's fair craft  
Unless you let it in.

(source unknown)

Got 10 lessons. Here they are:

Lesson #1: We are commanded to recognize and respect the leadership over us in the body of Christ.

Lesson #2: We are to be busy about the Lord's work.

Lesson #3: We are to be encouraging the discouraged.

Lesson #4: We are to be patient with everybody.

Lesson #5: The Christian is to be joyful no matter what the circumstances may be.

Lesson #6: We are commanded to maintain constant communion with our Savior.

Lesson #7: We can be giving thanks in all things because His sovereignty has allowed it.

Lesson #8: We can be guilty of grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit.

Lesson #9: We must accept and obey the teaching of the Scripture.

Lesson #10: We are to steer clear of all which is evil.

I hope you'll take those 20 things that we've looked at and you'll reflect on those today. Just make your own little spiritual diagnosis. See if this prescription might not work.

I would suggest that if you can say Yes to these 20 things, there's going to be some significant things that are going to happen.

*In the Eye of the Storm*, which is Max Lucado's last book. His newest one I have with me—*When the Angels Were Silent*—that is just about to be released and I've just about finished it. It's an excellent book. You're going to look forward to that. But in that last book he said this:

(*In the Eye of the Storm: A day in the Life of Jesus* by Max Lucado)

And I hope you never forget the last Lighthouse Law:  
Approach life like a voyage on a schooner. Enjoy the view.  
Explore the vessel. Make friends with the captain. Fish a  
little. And then get off when you get home.

Good sailing!

p. 260

And then David Seamands in *Living with Your Dreams* says:

(*Living with Your Dreams* by David A. Seamands)

Here are some practical suggestions, five important R's for  
*resisting* times of attack which come through recurring  
feelings. [The feelings of Revenge and Resentment.]

*Recall* their source—Satan, the father of lies

*Reiterate* your will to forgive

*Refuse* to allow guilt or condemnation a place in your heart

*Remember* God is faithful and will continue to change your  
feelings

[And last]

*Rejoice* that God is pleased with you every step of the way.

p. 132

Father, we didn't want to come to the end of this series of  
studies without being practical. Thank You that Paul because  
he loved these dear saints in Thessalonica, wanted to  
capsulize the truth in just a few verses. And thank You that

these verses are so packed. Thank You that we've seen these things that he is suggesting to remedy the problems that they were facing in Thessalonica. Lord, I just pray that we'd be wise enough to believe that those same 19 things could revolutionize our Christian lives. And we could play our lives against this prescription and can see areas where we need to develop more Christlikeness and cooperate with Your Spirit doing that good work in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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## A Practical Study of 1 THESSALONIANS: Your Spiritual Checkup

### “Victory in Areas of Vulnerability”

Key verse 3:10 — *“night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith”*

#### **QUESTION NUMBER ELEVEN – HAVE YOU TRIED THIS? – 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-22**

##### **KEY VERSE 5:18**

v. 12 Now we are asking you, brethren, to know (recognize) those who are toiling among you, and those who are in authority over you in the Lord and those who are exhorting you,  
v. 13 and be respecting them very highly in love for their work. Be at peace among yourselves.  
v. 14 Now we are urging you, brethren, to be admonishing the lazy (idle), be encouraging the discouraged, be paying attention to those who are weak, be patient toward all.  
v. 15 Be seeing to it that no one gives back evil for evil to anyone, but always be pursuing the good for one another and for all.  
v. 16 Always be rejoicing;  
v. 17 unceasingly be praying;  
v. 18 in everything be giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.  
v. 19 Stop stifling the Spirit;  
v. 20 stop rejecting with contempt prophesyings.  
v. 21 But be putting all things to the test, and holding fast the good;  
v. 22 be abstaining from every form (kind) of evil.

##### **NOTES**

##### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. What is our attitude to be towards those who are in “authority” over us, according to verses 12 & 13?

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3. What does Paul tell us to do in verse 14?

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4. What is our responsibility toward those who hurt us, according to verse 15?

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5. What three things does Paul tell us to do in verses 16-18?

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6. Why are we to be “giving thanks,” according to verse 18?

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7. How do you think it is possible to quench the Holy Spirit in our lives?

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8. What are we supposed to be doing, according to verse 21?

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9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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**LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: We are commanded to recognize and respect the leadership over us in the body of Christ.

LESSON #2: We are to be busy about the Lord's work.

LESSON #3: We are to be encouraging the discouraged.

LESSON #4: We are to be patient with everyone.

LESSON #5: The Christian is to be joyful no matter what the circumstances may be.

LESSON #6: We are commanded to maintain constant communion with our Savior.

LESSON #7: We can be giving thanks in all things because His sovereignty has allowed it.

LESSON #8: We can be guilty of grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit.

LESSON #9: We must accept and obey the teaching of Scripture.

LESSON #10: We are to steer clear of all evil.