

Following and Leading Well – 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

- Who is this letter written to? The church in Thessalonica!
- Who is it from? Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ to the gentiles!
- How is this letter written? **With brotherly love!** – Vs 12

Paul could have put on his authoritative hat as an Apostle, the one called by God to lead the church, but instead he appeals to them as a brother!

The relationship between leaders (pastor/elder/parent/boss/coach/teacher) **and those they lead speaks volumes about the health** of that organization!

Now Paul is not saying that there should not be a hierarchy in the church, what he is doing is modeling what that hierarchy should look like!

God has called pastors, elders & deacons to lead the church in the mission of God in this world, the question is whether they will lead out of a genuine love for those they lead or out of a sense of power that their position holds?

For leaders to lead well, they must first learn to follow the example of Jesus! Jesus called those He led brothers & friends. He laid down His life for them.

Good leaders will lead out of a genuine love for those under their leadership! This is a challenge for all of us on Consistory & all the ministry leaders of BRC!

But what about those who are led, what responsibility do they have?

Paul addresses them by saying, **“respect those who labor among you and who 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.”** Vs. 12-13

We are to **respect** those who lead in the church, b/c they labor for the Lord! Their leadership is by God’s design! So even when they admonish us, they deserve our respect because God intends to rule us through their leadership!

Paul calls us to **esteem** them very highly in love! Why? B/c of their work!

Have you ever considered the work that our leaders have been called to?

Pastors – To be the minister of the Word & the Sacraments in the church!

Elders – To give watchful oversight & responsible care to the congregation!

Deacons – To lead the church in the ministry of mercy, service & outreach!

B/c of their high calling & their labor of love, Paul calls us to **be at peace w/ one another** – leader-leader/leader-congregation/congregant-congregant!

This is what it means to follow well - to be a blessing to those who lead well!

But Paul reminds the Thessalonians that leadership in the church is not only for those who are in elected offices! **We are all called to lead one another!**

- We all share in this responsibility as brothers & sisters in Christ.

Paul urges all of us **“to admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.”** Vs. 14-15

We all have a job to do! **We are all the ministers** of this congregation!

For all of us will at times be wayward, worried, weak, wearisome & wicked & it’s all of our jobs, as Paul says in vs. 14-15, to admonish, encourage, help, be patient with, seek the good of & sharpen one another in the faith!

When someone is idle/wayward - not willing to seek the transformative work of God in their life, Paul doesn’t say “go tell your pastor”! He says **“admonish”** them – come alongside & warn them as a brother/sister!

When someone is fainthearted/worried about life & what they should do, Paul doesn’t say “go find an elder”, he says **“encourage”** them, literally – “speak alongside them”, “spur them on”!

When someone is weak & suffering, Paul doesn’t say “well that’s what we have deacons for”, no he says **“help”** them – literally “hold them up.”

When people in the church aren’t where we think they should be, Paul doesn’t say “blame the leadership”, he says **“Be patient!”** We all are works-in-progress!

And when someone wrongs us in the church, what should we do? Does Paul say, “Wait for the leadership to deal with it/them & if they don’t then retaliate?” No, Paul says **“See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another & to everyone”** – Vs. 5.

God is at work in His people & He uses His people to bring that work to **fruition!**

This is what it means to be the Church, an active & integral member of it!

This is what it means to “follow” and to “lead” well as God’s people/Church!

And as we put these things into practice, Paul says that we will be able to **“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you!”** Do you believe it? Then live it!

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