

Home Group Leader Notes  
1 Thessalonians 5:12-28  
Pursuing Peace  
10 May 2026

1. Home Group Announcements
  - a. Grace Connection - 5-week course begins May 17th
  - b. Membership Affirmation - May 24th
  - c. VBS Volunteering - Sign up today, meeting tomorrow (May 11, @ 6:30pm)
2. Start-up
  - a. Review and discuss highlights from the entire study of 1 Thessalonians. Share what you have learned from the letter, particularly the things that have challenged or encouraged you.
  - b. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28.
3. Questions for Review/Discussion
  - a. NOTE: There are more questions than time would allow, please feel free to cover no, any, or all questions you feel necessary. I hope and pray these questions aid your discussion! - Kyler
  - b. **Review:** In what ways did Paul instruct the Thessalonians to live at peace with one another?
    - i. Pursue peace externally: with leaders and with one another.
    - ii. Pursue peace internally: with God and his will - trusting his power.
  - c. **Discussion:** Why should the church value peace and strive to leave at peace with one another?
  - d. **Discussion:** Which is most difficult for you to pursue peace with: leaders, other believers, or God's will? Why?
  - e. **Review:** On what basis do our church leaders earn respect and honor?
    - i. Their work, NOT their position or title.
    - ii. **Follow-up:** Why do so many churches honor their leaders based on title or position? Why is that a dangerous practice?
  - f. **Review:** How are we to pursue peace with our leaders? Share practical ways you can do so.
    - i. We pursue peace with leaders by respecting and honoring them.
  - g. **Discussion:** We all need spiritual guidance and help. Take a moment to share some ideas on how y'all, as a homegroup, can help one another, or share how

the homegroup can come alongside you in your own spiritual walk. In sharing, keep in mind the following commands regarding our mutual pursuit of peace:

- i. **Instruct the disorderly, encourage the worried, help the weak.**
- h. **Review:** What is the guiding principle in pursuing peace with one another?
  - i. **Patience.**
  - ii. **Follow-up:** How have you been impatient with others and how can you learn to be more patient?
- i. **Review:** What role does the indwelling Holy Spirit play in our pursuits of peace?
  - i. **He empowers us - we trust his power to lovingly pursue peace.**
  - ii. **He leads us - in accordance with truth, the gospel, and the kingdom.**
  - iii. **He brings us peace - we will trust in God's will and plans.**
- j. **Discussion:** God is faithful to us and will complete the work he started in us. Why do we need to remind ourselves of this truth?

#### 4. Study Notes.

- a. **A young Thessalonian church.** This church was still very young when this letter was written - most likely less than two years old. As a result, the church did not have strong or established leadership or doctrine. In other letters, Paul's words of reform are more intended for the sake of gospel proclamation in the region. While this would have certainly been true for Thessalonica ('and to everyone' - v.15), Paul's instructions here seem not as far-sighted as other letters. Paul truly wanted these believers to workshop their own church, leadership, and relationships without the pressure of its larger implications.
- b. **Romans 12.** The form of these verses share in likeness of the instructions found in Romans 12. While this sermon has brought cohesion to the text, it is possible that they are given as uncorrelated commands in the likeness of Romans 12.
- c. **The pastor's work.** The word "labor" in gk. carries connotations of a field or manual laborer. Paul is suggesting that the pastor/elder/overseer's work is to be on-par with the work of a tradesman or manual laborer. Hence, this would keep in-step with Paul's other instructions for the church to care provisionally for the pastor/elder/overseer that labors in teaching.
- d. **Groupings of church members.** There is much ambiguity regarding the "groupings" of people in v. 13-14. Some commentators think these are the same people from chapter 4. Others think that these are other sub-groups distinct from the ones mentioned in chapter 4. Yet others think that Paul is speaking in generalities regarding the church. Interpretation of these groupings does not impact the nature and practice of the commands.
- e. **Corporate worship.** Some commentators believe that verses 16-23 serve as a Pauline commentary on corporate worship. Their argument is as follows: (1) "you" in these verses are all plural, (2) verses 16-18 possibly indicates three

liturgical elements of an ancient worship gathering, (3) the spiritual gifts of tongues and prophecy (v.19-20) were most utilized in corporate gatherings, and (4) verse 23 serves as a benediction to the corporate gathering. I address these four arguments in representing a differing view: (1): while “you” is plural, Paul could simply be instructing/encouraging individuals within a corporate letter. In verse 23, Paul uses you (plural) while talking about the ‘spirit, soul, and body’, which implies an address to the individual Christian. The corporate church would not be described as having one soul or spirit. (2): while it is possible these are liturgical elements, little historical evidence exists to support the claim. In addition, Paul uses terms “always” and “in every circumstance”, thus indicating his view is not limited only to the corporate gathering. (3): while tongues and prophecy were most utilized in corporate gatherings, these gifts are still initiated on an individual basis. In addition, Paul’s instruction to “test” prophecy does not include other corporate elements here, as was his instruction to the Corinthians for their corporate gatherings regarding tongues and prophecy (1 Cor. 14:27-29). Again, there is no strong indicator that Paul limits his view to only the corporate gathering. (4): benediction to a gathering or to a letter? Letter takes primary interpretation here for obvious reasons and Paul almost always includes a benediction to his letters. (5): Paul has explicitly addressed corporate gatherings with specific instructions in other letters (1 Cor. 11:17-34). There is no explicit mention of the corporate gathering here. On these arguments, I have chosen to interpret the text as the individual Christian, not the corporate gathering, who is the object of the Spirit’s work and power. Theologically, the Spirit is at work equally in both since the corporate gathering is composed of individuals.

- f. **Pray without ceasing.** This is a reference to a ‘spirit of prayer’ and not an instruction to actively/consciously pray in every moment. Paul’s view of prayer is that it is typically directed toward the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18) or to Christ as mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). His comment here is to point the believer’s attention to the always-present Holy Spirit and his power to direct their lives.
- g. **Test prophecies.** Prophecies were a big deal during this time in the early church. There was rare communication between churches as it would take years for letters to be written and distributed. Formulation of a completed canon regarding NT texts was nowhere in view at this time. Most likely, if any early churches had any NT texts, they would have had a copy of Matthew and other randomly dispersed letters, from a plurality of authors. Considering this may have been Paul’s first letter, this church in particular may have only had Matthew as a NT text, and even that is not a guarantee. As a result, this church would have been much more reliant upon prophecies in their worship gatherings. They were instructed to test their prophecies in light of Jesus’ and the apostles’ teaching, that they had received by word-of-mouth. The debate of cessationism and continualism still rages today and such a debate is not in the purview of this text. It can be stated, however, that since the written Word is complete and accessible, it is logical that prophecies today would be limited in scope compared to the early church.

- h. **Spirit, soul, body.** Paul is not making the case for a tripartite view of human nature, as opposed to a dipartite view (soul (or spirit) and body). While it may be the case that Paul himself understands human nature to be such, his aim is to comment on the completeness of God's sanctifying work. God will sanctify the entirety of the individual Christian - there is not one part of our human nature that God will not bring to sanctified completeness.
  - i. **V.25-27.** These verses could serve as a review of the verses 12-14, or we could also see these verses as Paul applying his own instructions from verses 12-14.
  - j. **Pray for us.** Paul highlights church leadership in this verse. Support leaders by praying for them.
  - k. **Greet with a kiss.** Kissing on the cheek was a common greeting in this particular area in and around Thessalonica. In our culture, we can read the verse like this: *greet all the brothers with a firm handshake*. The practical point here is that we are to be intentional with one another in our relationships.
  - l. **Under oath.** The purpose of this phrase is to show the importance and primacy of God's written Word in the life of the church. Paul did not see his own letter in the same way he viewed the prophecies among the Thessalonians, for those prophecies needed testing. This letter needed no test - it was verifiably the Word of God and as such, must be proclaimed to God's people.
5. Relevant texts.
- a. **Galatians 5:16:** But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
  - b. **Ephesians 4:11-14:** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes
  - c. **Ephesians 3:20:** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.
  - d. **Jeremiah 29:10-14:** For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.
6. Quotes from the sermon.

- a. **Ligon Duncan:** *If love is patient, then impatience is evidence of a deficiency of love.*
- b. **Jim Shaddix:** *Your prayer life, or the lack of, is the most obvious sign of your dependence on the Spirit's power.*