



STANDING FAST IN THE LORD

Faithfully Awake for the One Who is Faithful

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

God commands his children to be well structured and willingly focused on the Lord's work of sanctifying his church (12-28).

- *The Lord asks his children to love and to listen to faithful, biblical leadership in their local church (12-13).*
- *The Lord commands his children to cultivate an environment of discipleship in their local church (13b-22).*
 - *Be at peace (13b).*
 - *Admonish the idle (14a).*
 - *Encourage the fainthearted (14b).*
 - *Help the weak (14c).*
 - *Be patient with all (14d).*
 - *See that evil isn't repaid with evil (15a).*
 - *Seek to do good to all (15b).*
 - *Rejoice always (16).*
 - *Pray without ceasing (17).*
 - *Give thanks at all times (18).*
 - *Don't quench the Spirit (19).*
 - *Don't despise prophecies (20).*
 - *Test everything (21a).*
 - *Hold fast to what is good (21b).*
 - *Abstain from all evil (22).*
 - *Pray for others (25).*
 - *Greet all your faith family in brotherly love (26).*

As Paul closes out his first letter to the church in Thessalonica, he packs 17 commands into 17 verses! These short, closing paragraphs are full of wisdom that is the very will of God for his church (1 Thess. 5:18). This section of the letter opens with an important request and then dives right into the following commands. We'll look at the foundation that the request lays, and then we'll explore the commands for the purpose of evaluating our focus on the Lord's work of sanctifying his church.

The request in verses 12-13 aren't a suggestion. They carry with them the force of a command. This is God's design for his church, and Paul's request is for the local church to be faithful to God's design for their faith family. The basic request is simple: The Lord asks his children to love and to listen to faithful, biblical leadership in their local church. The request is for the members of the church to respect and to love their leaders who labor in the ministry of the Word. This labor includes leadership. These are the leadership of the church that the Lord has called and placed in leadership over the church. They are also the men who in this work are called to admonish those in the church. Admonishing means to caution, to reprove, to warn, and to exhort. It is connected to the ministry of the Word and the work of preaching and teaching the Word (Acts 20:31, Col. 1:28). In other words, for the church to function as God intended it to in the mission of making disciples and the sanctification of the saints, the church must be willing to respect and to love their leaders. They must listen to the admonishment in the Spirit that comes through the ministry of the Word. This is the



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foundation for “being at peace with one another” and everything else that follows in this passage related to the sanctifying work of the Lord in his church.

The request is followed by a rapid-fire series of commands. In 16 verses, there are 17 commands, which are all focused on one key desire of the Lord: The Lord commands his children to cultivate an environment of discipleship in their local church. A well-structured, willingly-focused church is a church that is actively pursuing discipleship under biblical leadership and in step with the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Peace isn’t reached by compromise or complacency. The church together should admonish those who are idle just as much as they encourage those who are fainthearted. They should help those who are weak, while being patient with all. As the goal is sanctification, the church must be careful not to repay evil with evil but to do good to all in the church and – as much as is possible – to those outside of the church as well. God’s desire is that his children are marked by the joy of their salvation, rejoicing in him always. His call is for his children to be prayerful, with hearts that are always listening and looking to him. He deserves a church that is grateful, thanking him for his goodness and mercy that follows his children every day of their lives through everything that they walk through in life. He demands a church that’s responsive to the Spirit and trusting of his truth. He wants a church that is careful to protect truth and hold fast to it. He commands his children to stay away from evil, pray for the work of the gospel, and love and greet one another as family in Christ.

Is this what the church looks like? Remember, it begins with each one of us. We are the church, and 1 Thessalonians 5 reminds us that our individual faithfulness to the Lord can’t be disconnected from our faithfulness to his church. We are a faith family by God’s design, and that family is essential to his work of sanctifying each one of us as his church!

1. *The Lord asks his children to love and to listen to faithful, biblical leadership in their local church (12-13).* Study these verses. Why is this request so important? Is this where your heart is in regard to the leadership in your church? Why, or why not? What are some of the reasons that this is sometimes difficult? What do you do if leadership isn’t faithful and biblical? Pray for your church leadership. Discuss how you can show them respect and love.
2. *The Lord commands his children to cultivate an environment of discipleship in their local church (13b-22).* Before we get into the specifics in these verses, why is it important to recognize there are 17 commands in these verses? What does that tell you about the way that we should approach studying and applying these verses in our church?
3. Take time to study the commands in verses 13b-26. Use the following questions to guide your discussion related to the meaning and application of these commands.
 - a. Which command stands out to you most right now? Why? Is it something that you’re experiencing right now? Is it something that you’re struggling to obey right now?
 - b. How is your small group and the DGroups in our church important in helping you observe God’s commandments in these verses?
 - c. Why is cross-generational discipleship in your faith family important when it comes to faithfulness to these commands?
 - d. Which command do you find the most difficult to observe in the context of your local church? Why? How can you spur one another on to obedience in this command?
 - e. Take time to pray for one another and for your local church, asking for the Lord to protect and strengthen us in obedience to his command for his church!