

Skin in the Game: Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

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Jeff Bruce, Lead Pastor

Protecting Our Spiritual Health – Part 1 (1 Thessalonians 5:12-15)

1. Follow Leaders (vv. 12-13): *“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. Be at peace among yourselves.”*

2. Love Followers (vv. 14-15): *“And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.”*

For further thought and discussion:

Getting Started

1. What was helpful to you in this week's sermon? What didn't you understand?
2. What habits have you changed (or adopted) in the past few weeks to protect the health of others? Which of these changes has been the most difficult to make?

Going Deeper

3. In Mark 9:50, Jesus says; *"Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."* How was salt utilized in the ancient world? How does peace function like salt for Christian community?
4. Paul encourages the Thessalonians, *"to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you"* (v. 12). According to Paul, what are the marks of a leader in the church? Why is it significant that Paul doesn't refer to leaders by name, but by their conduct?
5. How is Paul's command, *"Have peace among yourselves"* (v. 13) connected to his appeal to acknowledge leaders (v. 12)? How is the church protected by following godly, qualified leadership (see Hebrews 13:17)?
6. Who is verse 14 addressed to (compare with verse 12)? Why is it critical for us to understand that Paul's instructions in verses 14-15 apply not only to leaders, but to every member of the body of Christ?

Application

7. Read through Paul's four commands in verse 14. Which of these is most relevant to you personally? Right now, do you most need to be (1) admonished, (2) encouraged, (3) helped, or (4) patient? Think through the people in your life who might need to be admonished (i.e. spurred to love and good deeds), encouraged, or helped. Make a plan to reach out to these people this week.
8. What's one thing you can do this week to apply this passage?