

# Gospel Responsibilities

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Date: 16 November 2025

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[ 0 : 00 ] There we go. All right, if you got your Bible, go ahead and turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and we're and does life together.

And what responsibilities have we been charged and entrusted with in God's household? So today's passage answers those questions.

1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 12 to 28. We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and 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. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle. Encourage the faint-hearted. 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. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.

[ 1 : 19 ] Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophecies.

But test everything. Hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely.

And may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it.

Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

This is God's word to us. You know, when times you closer to Asher, leaving house and going up to college in the final kind of months there, I started to think about all the important life lessons that I had yet to pass on to him.

[ 2 : 24 ] But I was like, my goodness, he needs to know these things, right? And some of them felt like they greet each other with the holy kiss things. Like, hey, you need to know that you have to empty the lint trap in the dryer.

Don't forget, that's a really important thing to do, you know? But then there's other really important things that I wanted to make sure that he was equipped with and ready to go out into this world and face it well.

What are the responsibilities as a young man becoming more mature in his life? What are the things that I said, hey, you need to grow up and be responsible for these things in your life? And it feels like Paul's doing that right here.

That's what this feels like. It feels like he's out of time. The letter's coming to a close or maybe the parchment's running out. We don't know, but he's still got a lot of truth rounds left in the clip.

And so he just starts unloading, right? It's like strafing style. He's just like, grrr. And so it feels like that, but actually he's being very strategic. This isn't what he is doing.

[ 3 : 20 ] Yes, he's bringing this letter to a close, but we have to remember he's just finished this admonition, right? Talking in light of the hope of Jesus' return.

In verse 11, he ends that whole passage with, therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. And so this section here follows on to that, and it provides contour that clarifies the responsibilities that go with encouraging one another and building one another up.

And the first responsibility has to do with godly authority. We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

One, we have to realize from this, God is a God of order and a God of peace. And so because of that, he has ordained leadership in the church, which means godly leadership is a gift and not a curse.

Therefore, we are responsible to respect and listen to godly leaders, which, to be honest, feels a little odd and self-serving for me to say.

[ 4 : 28 ] I'll just be honest about that, right? This isn't me saying, like, you better respect my authority, right? Because these verses, they actually set a high bar for what godly leaders do.

First, it says they are to be among you. Godly leadership is available and it's visible. You should be able to look at our lives, godly leaders' lives, to see if they are bearing good fruit.

If they're married, is it a good marriage? If they have kids, are they well-behaved and respectful? Do they have healthy, tenured relationships in their life? Do they handle their finances wisely or not? Are they generous or are they stingy? And the list can go on and on and on. And if you want to be a godly leader, guess what? You're signing up for life in a fishbowl, okay?

Leaders that show up for Sunday service and shut themselves off the rest of the week are not what God has in mind. And if that sounds like a lot to bear, it is.

[ 5 : 29 ] That's why it says in verse 12, they are to labor among you. And that word labor in the Greek means to work hard. It means to toil. Godly leaders just don't work hard on sermons.

They toil with the people. As in caring and counseling and teaching and instructing. And this last little bit, dare I say, admonishing.

And that word just means to gently correct. And in this context, it means two things. To gently correct to what? Well, realignment to God's truth.

And holding the people of God responsible and accountable to their gospel responsibilities. And if you're new to City Grace or new to this idea of church and are just checking this out and wondering, like, how does all of this work?

What does your togetherness look like? It means this. One, you will be loved. Absolutely. And two, you don't get your way. And you know what?

[ 6 : 30 ] That goes for me too. Just because I'm a leader, it doesn't mean I get my way. Godly leaders don't correct for their own benefit. They don't correct for their own preference. We lay all those things aside and we have to be faithful to the clear truths laid out in Scripture.

Implied also in this word of admonition is the nature of correction. Which is to be gentle or encouraging. And this sounds like an obvious thing until you step into any form of leadership.

Because if you want fast results, you're not going to like the gentle, encouraging route. That takes time. You will go the harsh and intimidating route. But here's the problem with that.

And why God makes no room for that kind of leadership in his household. Harsh leadership produces robots or rebels. God is producing sons and daughters.

That's the dream for this church. That's the dream for City Grace. A plurality, a multiplying of godly leaders. Spiritual fathers and mothers. In various leadership roles.

[ 7 : 38 ] Whether that's elder or deacon or as a small group leader. And those leaders are faithful to be faithful to God's truth. But they also know how to wield it with gentleness and in love for the flourishing of God's children.

It's why I like the household language. Because it pushes back on the concept of leadership today that celebrates gifted charismatic leaders who get the job done. And really aren't concerned about their character.

They seem to be known. But they're actually not really known by anybody. Too many pastors. They go about their job by quarantining themselves from the people.

Until there's a big enough problem that needs to be taken care of. And then they sweep in. They bring harsh correction. Because that's the quick, easy fix. So I can get back to the more important work.

But God desires to multiply godly leaders who are invested in being with the people to build them up. God wants godly leaders who are invested in building people, not their platforms.

[ 8 : 43 ] And when there's godly leadership. And people looking to them and listening to them. It makes the last part of 13b, verse 13, or the second part there, a reality.

Where it says, be at peace among yourselves. And we have to understand what Paul means. His Hebrew mind, peace means order, harmony, alignment, goodness, flourishing.

It means the absence of unresolved conflict and bitterness and divisions. Peace requires unity. Unity requires alignment and harmony.

In order of being of one heart and one mind. And this kind of peace extends to every relational reality in God's household. Verse 14, it says, we urge you brothers, admonish the idle.

Encourage the faint hearted. 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.

[ 9 : 45 ] What does this mean? It means that you and I, we are responsible to build each other up with all wisdom and patience. Verse 14, we're strongly encouraged to be in each other's business in three ways.

Admonish, encourage, and help. And here's where some wisdom and discernment is necessary. Anytime we are ministering to someone or anytime we learn about something or someone is facing something or there's something seems to be broken or a difficult trial in their life, we have to look and consider what is really going on here.

Is this a broken spirit issue? Is this a broken body issue? Or is this just a lack of discipline issue? Because it could be any of those three things. You don't correct the faint hearted.

And you don't encourage the idle. And that word idle there, it just means to lack discipline. Another way to say it is don't correct the sufferer and encourage the sinner.

We can't get those backwards. And the presumption, if this is happening, is that it is happening in well-connected relationships. Think about this.

[ 10 : 55 ] Jesus' disciples, right? There's this episode where they're looking at this blind man. They know nothing about him. And so they're sitting back from him. And they're playing the who must have sinned game about him.

Talking about him without really knowing anything about him. They're judging him from a distance. Judgment, judging others from a distance. It is a very easy thing to do. But it's not the way of Jesus. Connection before correction is gospel wisdom. When we connect with others, what we're doing is we're spending time. We're getting to know the full story and not just how things are presenting. And when you do that, you may find some interesting facts that you didn't know before. And those new data points could bring compassion and understanding. And it might shift you from, man, this person needs admonition.

It might shift from that to, actually, this person just might need some help. Or they just might need some encouragement. And actually, that's the right response. Or sitting with them long enough, you may find that things are as straightforward as they may seem.

[ 12 : 00 ] And admonition is probably the right thing to do. But all that to say is you have to sit in it with them. You have to know. You have to connect. And when you do that, what Elliot talked about a few weeks back, a relational bridge begins to be built so that you can bring heavy gospel truth across.

Right? Now, I want to double tap on this admonition just a little bit longer. The admonition of the idol. Because I think today, in today's church, in our kind of cultural setting, it's kind of an anathema to do that.

There's been a swing from, like, overcorrection. Right? Where it's like, it feels like everybody had the ministry of rebuking. To, like, now we're shifting to undercorrection.

And I think today we prefer to play in the help and encouraging sandbox. But Paul makes gentle correction everyone's responsibility.

Not just the pastors. Everyone's responsibility. Undisciplined, immature people, we are called to love them.

[ 13 : 08 ] And one of the ways that we love them is that sometimes they need gentle correction to grow up. If I still clean up my teenager's room, I am not helping at all.

I'm enabling bad habits to continue. I remember I was visiting a family and they had a couple of teenagers. And so, they were showing me. I got a tour of the house and we walked into their bedroom.

And my goodness, it looked like a bomb went off in there. Right? And I just looked at them and said, like, I love you guys, but for the sake of your future wives, can you please learn to clean your room?

We all had a good laugh. And I don't know if they cleaned their room at all, but that was my admonition to them. But I had a good, I was well connected with them. I had a relationship where I could say that thing and they could receive it.

Life together takes wisdom and it takes courage. Whether we seek to build up people through help or encouragement or gentle correction, we also have to do it with an understanding that that change in them may not take place immediately.

[ 14 : 18 ] And that's why the encouragement here is be patient with everybody. Be patient. Be patient. Be patient. Why? Because God changes people and their circumstances, not your great advice.

Now, he will use you. He can use your encouragement and admonitions. He can use that for sure. But he does it in his timing and according to his goodwill and plan.

And so, you might be a part of God's process, but realize that with a lot of humility, that your little moment isn't the whole process. Okay? So, in wisdom, admonish.

In wisdom, encourage. In wisdom, help. And be patient and trust God with the results. And when you live towards that way, you give what the gospel says they need, not what you think they deserve.

Which follows Paul's admonition in verse 15. Don't retaliate the way the world does. Don't repay anyone evil for evil. Always seek to do good for one another and to everyone.

[ 15 : 28 ] And that is how the gospel manifests itself. For how we're meant to treat one another. It's not indifference, but it's also not harsh or manipulative. It's appropriately courageous and kind in our commitment to keep each other unified and aligned to the truth of God.

And that's important, but it's also impossible without also all of us staying committed to life together in God's presence. And so, we continue on in 16.

Rejoice always, Paul says. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything.

Hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now, I warn that, you know, there's gonna be things in here that probably is gonna cut across our preferences and our personality.

But nevertheless, in God's household and what we believe is the Bible holds authority over those things. So, we approach this carefully. And I wanna ask you to approach everything we're gonna cover without any pretext of what you want it to mean.

[ 16 : 37 ] And so, when we get into these particulars, there's a lot there, but the guiding principle is this. You and I are responsible to enjoy and respond appropriately to who God is and what he is doing.

So, responding to who God is, rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances.

And when you understand that rightly, that can bring blessing. But if you misunderstand that, that can become a heavy burden of condemnation. Think about this.

How does one pray without ceasing? Because, guess what? I'm not doing that right now. Does that mean I'm being disobedient to God's word and must repent for my insolent and calloused heart?

And this is obviously not. This is where God's truth meets wisdom. Paul is using hyperbole here to make a point. What he is wanting to convey is that prayer is communion with God, with your creator, with your savior, with your father in heaven.

[ 17 : 46 ] And that is so important that you should weave it into your life as much as possible. So, the next time you reach for your phone to YouTube or TikTok or game or podcast or shop or meme scroll or whatever it is, just stop and take a moment, put the phone down, and reach out to God in prayer.

You know, the more time you spend with someone, the more you get to know what they are really like. And that is, to me, the highest benefit of prayer. We get to grow in knowing God.

We get to know his heart. We get to know him better. And he makes himself available to do that through that amazing means of grace. And here's the thing. The more you know him, the more you will rejoice in him.

To know his salvation and all that it means for you, what he has done for you, what he is doing, and what he will do, that makes you thankful. And it goes beyond that.

As you spend time with him, it starts to settle in that, you know what, this God that I'm praying with, he is a God that is near and available and with me in all things and at all times.

[ 18 : 56 ] And that makes it possible for you to rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstances. Always and all good times and bad times.

Paul isn't saying here that you're not allowed to be sad or confused or angry in the face of certain events or in seasons of suffering. But along with those feelings, there can be accompanied with it an abiding joy and thanksgiving, knowing that, one, God is with you and near, and two, that he is good and his plans for us, although at times can be hidden and mysterious, they are also good. And in the end, his purpose for you will be validated, as will your trust in him. And this doesn't look like dancing at your spouse's funeral, okay? It doesn't look like doing backflips of joy at the cancer diagnosis.

That's not what we're getting at here. It means that along with the tears and the heartbreaks and the disappointments, there is a hope and a gratitude for God's eternal life and life with him that's never gonna end.

The restoration of wholeness to all those things, body, soul, and spirit, and mind, and that attends to our present situations. But we don't just look ahead and just have hope that, you know what, one day there's gonna be that future glory.

[ 20 : 21 ] He's with us now. He speaks to us. He speaks to us through his word, and he speaks to us in our prayers. I wanna encourage you in your prayer. We often think about prayer as us speaking to God, but prayer is a two-way street.

God speaks to you in prayer as well. Open your ears and listen to him. And sometimes when he speaks in his word and in prayer, it's good for you, and that could be a you thing, but sometimes that me thing turns, God wants it to be a we thing, okay?

It goes on beyond you to us. That means it's meant to be passed on for the edification of the church, which is why Paul warns in verse 20, notice he switches from encouragement to admonition in verse 20 because he is a wise, godly leader.

He knows when to step into that. And he says, do not quench the spirit, and do not despise prophecy. So what that means is you and I, we are responsible to respond wisely to the spirit's activity among us.

Many commentators believe that Paul is addressing a faction in the church here who are seeking to prohibit the manifestations of the spirit, and particularly prophecy. And he says, quite clearly, don't do that.

[ 21 : 38 ] And all my Baptist friends out there, just hear me out for a second, okay? All right. Paul provides some wise guidance with regard to prophecy. In one sense, he says, don't despise it.

It's not an evil manifestation of the devil. In another sense, don't sanctify it wholesale as if it can never be wrong or misused or abused. So Paul's saying, don't be a scoffer and don't be a sucker, okay?

Be open and test everything. That's what it says. Prophecy in the New Testament. If we're looking at this in the New Testament context, what we're given here.

It rarely was a prediction of future events. We have guys like Agabus who predicted the Jerusalem famine and then Paul's imprisonment, but that was the rarity of it.

Its normal function was for the building up and for the edification of the church, as Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians. But that doesn't mean that this good gift can't be misused, and that doesn't mean there won't be false prophets and misguided people.

[ 22 : 49 ] People have prophesied Jesus' return many times, and they were wrong. People have prophesied things that were clearly against God's nature and character.

I will tell you some of the ones that I have experienced. Divorce your spouse, marry me. Satan was Jesus' brother. God is promising to answer your prayer of healing or to bring back your wayward child if you give me money.

False prophets today say things like, God doesn't care who you sleep with, and everybody's going to heaven. There are a lot of false prophets out there promising many things, as there are false teachers.

But our response isn't to quench those things, right? We would not think to quench teaching just because there are bad teachers out there, nor should we seek to quench prophecy just because there's false prophets out there.

But we are called to test it. We're called to judge it. And how do we do that? Well, we attest it, one, to what God has clearly revealed in his word.

[ 23 : 55 ] Okay? Prophecy is not over scripture. Prophecy is not alongside scripture. Prophecy is submitted to scripture. It's submitted to the truth of God's word. And so if somebody brings something that doesn't align with the word of God, that's an easy, mm-mm.

That ain't working. We test it, and we judge it against that plumb line. Does it align, or does it not align? Well, how does that work out, Jesse?

How do you possibly do that? Well, I've seen this also in my experience in church meetings. Elders serve as the gatekeepers. We're not encouraging a just shout your prophecy from your seat. Okay? That is disorder. And God is not a God of disorder and chaos. So elders serve as the gatekeeper who receive any prophetic contributions, and their job is to discern and decide if this is meant to go public and be brought to the church for their encouragement or their building up. And what I've seen is people come, and they share what God has been impressing on them, whether it is a scripture passage or some picture in their mind or a phrase or something like that. And if there is a clear thread of continuity, and I've seen this, multiple people coming, and it seems like the Holy Spirit is speaking the same thing in different ways to different people, you find that thread of continuity, and if it fits with the nature of God and the truth of his redemptive purposes for the sole purpose of edification and building up in the church, then the elder can say, you know what?

[ 25 : 27 ] This can be brought to the church for consideration. That is a good way, a wise way, to handle the gift of prophecy, and with all humility. In anything that we do, prophecy, teaching, whatever it is, we are meant to hold fast to what is good.

We are meant to abstain from every form of evil, even the ones that begin with, I feel the Lord is saying. 17 commands in this passage.

17 commands for us to know and for us to obey. That's a lot of responsibility. It can feel like, man, God is a father that has expectations that are just way too high.

Does he not know who I am? If you're in that spot, you are not alone. That resonates with me. But then I read these verses. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely.

May your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it.

[ 26 : 43 ] See, Paul doesn't place his confidence in the people in Thessalonica. He isn't placing his confidence in you and me being great people that are just like, man, I know you can do this, guys.

He, his confidence is the God at work within the people. And that takes a lot of pressure off of you and me. God has taken the responsibility responsibility on himself to work this out in us.

We do the work. We pick up these responsibilities in response to the work God is doing in us. We do the work because he promised to complete it in us.

And he is faithful to his promises. Friends, you and I can't afford to get this wrong. Being responsible won't earn your salvation, nor does it force God's hand to sanctify your heart.

If you believe that, that is a path toward pride or despair because you're trusting in yourself. Don't embrace, embrace these gospel responsibilities, but don't embrace them with the confession, I will surely do it.

[ 27 : 55 ] Embrace them with the confession because he has done it and will surely do it in me. Yes, I can do this. It's a big difference.

As the band comes up and we look to respond today, in a moment we're gonna take communion, which reminds us that Jesus took our responsibility for our sin on himself.

If you're not yet a follower of Jesus, your responsibility today is to believe in that truth. He took responsibility for your sin to save you from the curse and penalty and power of sin.

And he invites you today, believe on him, believe and repent and you will be saved. And there's gonna be a prayer up on the screen for you to pray. And I wanna encourage you to pray that.

If you are already a follower of Jesus, Jesus, he has surely done it. Amen? He has surely done it.

[ 29 : 00 ] And he is doing it and will do it. He is working it out in us. And our confidence to take up gospel responsibility is placed on him, not us.

He has given us everything we need and he will continue to supply everything we need. So we can come to the table today with thanks for this meal of grace.

Pray with me. Jesus, I just pray that we would be, we would be in awe.

We would be impressed, not with ourselves, but with what you have done. The responsibility that you have taken upon yourself. that you have guaranteed this, that what you have begun, you are going to bring to completion.

And so we come with great confidence. we come to a table of grace to feast on you, to be reminded that you have done everything that we truly need.

[ 30 : 19 ] We thank you for your blood that was shed for us. We thank you for your body that was broken for us. May it stir up thanksgiving. May it stir up encouragement.

Amen. I pray this in your name. Amen. As you consider your response, you can do business with God right now, but whenever you're ready, you can go to the table nearest you and take the elements and bring it back to your seat and take communion when you're ready.

Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen.