

It's All In The Family

PART 1



EVERY

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NEW MERCIES CHRISTIAN CHURCH | JOHN 4: 28-30

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2
(Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 186–189.

1 Thessalonians 5:12–18 (NKJV)

12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,

13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

16 Rejoice always,
17 pray without ceasing,
18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of
God in Christ Jesus for you.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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- Paul's favorite name for believers was brethren. He used it at least sixty times in his letters; and in the two Thessalonian Epistles, he used it twenty-seven times.
- Paul saw the local church as a family. Each member was born again by the Spirit of God and possessed God's nature (*1 Peter 1:22–25; 2 Peter 1:3–4*).
- They all were part of God's family.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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- It is tragic when believers neglect or ignore the local church.
- No family is perfect and no local church is perfect; but without a family to protect him and provide for him, a child would suffer and die. The child of God needs the church family if he is to grow, develop his gifts, and serve God.
- What are the essentials for a happy, thriving church family?
- How can we make our local churches more spiritual to the glory of God? In this closing section, Paul discussed these matters.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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Family Leadership

(1 Thes. 5:12–13)

1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 (NKJV)

12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,
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- Without leadership, a family falls apart. The father is the head of the home; the mother stands with him in love and cooperation.
- The children are to obey their parents. This is the order God has laid down, and for us to disturb this order is to ask for serious trouble.
- Many students need counseling, but no professional worker can take the place of a loving, faithful father or mother.

- God has ordained leadership for the local church. It is true that we are “*all one in Christ Jesus*” (*Gal. 3:28*); but it is also true that the Head of the church has given gifts to people, and then given these people to the churches to exercise His will (*Eph. 4:7–16*).
- Just as the flock needs a shepherd (*1 Peter 5:1–5*), so the family needs a leader.
- What responsibilities do the brethren have toward their spiritual leaders?

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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Accept Them

- They are God's gifts to the church.
- They have spiritual authority from the Lord and we should accept them in the Lord.
- They are not dictators, but leaders and examples. As they follow the Lord, we must follow them.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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Appreciate Them

- That is the meaning of the exhortation “*know them who labor among you*” (1 Thes. 5:12).
- There is nothing wrong with honoring faithful servants of God, so long as God gets the glory.
- Spiritual leadership is a great responsibility and a difficult task. It is not easy to serve as a pastor, elder, minister, deacon, or other spiritual leader.

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Appreciate Them

- The battles and burdens are many, and sometimes the encouragements are few.
- It is dangerous when a church family takes their leaders for granted and fails to pray for them, work with them, and encourage them.

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Love Them

- As brothers, and sisters the leaders are “*among us*”; and as leaders, they are “*over us in the Lord.*”
- This could be a very strained relationship apart from true Christian love.
- For a pastor to be “*among*” and “*over*” at the same time demands grace and the power of the Spirit.

Love Them

- If he or she gets out of balance, his or her ministry will be weakened and possibly destroyed.
- Some church members want their pastor to be a buddy, but this weakens his or her authority. On the other hand, if he emphasizes only his or her authority, he or she could become a selfish dictator.

Obey Them

- *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves” (Heb. 13:17).*
- When God’s servant, led by God’s Spirit, calls us to obey God’s Word, then we must obey.

It’s All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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Obey Them

- This does not mean that every spiritual leader is always right in everything.
- Abraham, Moses, David, and even Peter made mistakes in their words and deeds.
- A wise pastor knows he is made of clay and admits when he or she is wrong or when he or she needs expert counsel.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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Obey Them

- But, in spite of their limitations, God's spiritual leaders should be respected and obeyed—unless it is obvious that they are out of God's will.
- As the spiritual leaders of the church meet together, plan, pray, and seek and follow God's will, we can be sure that God will rule and overrule in the decisions they make.

Obey Them

- The result of the church family following the spiritual leaders will be peace and harmony in the church: “And be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thes. 5:13).
- Whenever you find division and dissension in a local church, it is usually because of selfishness and sin on the part of the leaders, or the members, or both.
- James 4:1–3 makes it clear that selfishness on the inside leads to strife on the outside.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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James 4:1–3 (NKJV)

1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

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Obey Them

- It is only as we submit to one another in the Lord that we can enjoy His blessings, and peace in the family.
- But the leaders alone cannot do all of the work of the ministry; so Paul added a second essential.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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Family Partnership

(1 Thes. 5:14–16)

1 Thessalonians 5:14–16 (NKJV)

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

16 Rejoice always,

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Body-Life

- In recent years, churches have rediscovered what we are calling “*body-life.*”
- This is a scriptural concept, though it does not define all that is involved in the ministry of the local church, since there are other pictures of the church besides that of the body.
- Body-life refers to the ministry of each Christian to the others, just as the various members of the human body minister to one another to maintain health and life.

Body-Life

- Family members must learn to minister to each other.
- The older members teach the younger members and encourage them when they are in difficulty.

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Body-Life

Titus 2:3–5 (NKJV)

3 the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—
4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,
5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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Body-Life

- According to Ephesians 4:12, the spiritual leaders in the church are supposed to equip the members to do the work of the ministry.

Ephesians 4:12 (NKJV)

for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

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Body-Life

- In most churches, the members pay the leaders to do the work of the ministry; and the leaders cannot do it all. Consequently, the work begins to weaken and die, and everybody blames the preacher.
- Paul named some special family members who need personal help.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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The Unruly

(v. 14a)

- This word means “*careless, out of line.*” It was applied to a soldier who would not keep rank but insisted on marching his own way.
- While the loving atmosphere of the family encourages individual development, there are some things we all must do in the same way. If we do not have rules and standards in the family, we have chaos.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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The Unruly

(v. 14a)

- Paul dealt with this problem again when he wrote his second Epistle to the Thessalonians (2 *Thes.* 3:6, 11), so apparently this first admonition did not impress them.

It's All In The Family (1 *Thes.* 5:12-18)

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2 Thessalonians 3:6 (NKJV)

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

2 Thessalonians 3:11 (NKJV)

For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.

The Feeble-minded

(v. 14b)

- This term has nothing to do with mentality. The literal translation of the Greek word is “*little-souled, fainthearted.*”
- These are the quitters in the church family. They always look on the dark side of things and give up when the going is tough.
- In families where there are three or more children, usually one of them is a quitter. Every church family has its share of quitters too.

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- These people need to be encouraged, which is the meaning of the word translated “*comforted*”.

1 Thessalonians 2:11 (NKJV)

as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,

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- The Greek word is made up of two words: para, near; and muthos, speech. Instead of scolding the fainthearted from a distance, we must get close to them and speak tenderly.
- We must teach the *“little-souled”* that the trials of life will help to enlarge them and make them stronger in the faith.

The Weak

(v. 14c)

- *“Hold fast to the weak!”* is the literal translation. *“Don’t let them fall!”* But who are these weak believers?
- Certainly, Paul did not mean people who were weak physically, since he was dealing with the spiritual ministry in the church.
- No, he was referring to those who were *“weak in the faith”* and had not grown strong in the Lord
(Rom. 14:1–15:3).

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Romans 15:1–3 (NKJV)

1 We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.

3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.”

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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- Usually, the weak Christians were afraid of their liberty in Christ. They lived by rules and regulations.
- In the Roman assemblies, the weak Christians would not eat meat, and they held to the Jewish system of holy days.
- They were severe in their judgment of the mature saints who enjoyed all foods and all days.

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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- We have the strong and the weak in our church families today, just as in our natural families we have children who mature faster than others.
- How should we handle them? With patient, reassuring love. It is unfair and unwise to compare one child with another, for each one matures in his own time and his own way.

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- We must “*take hold*” of these weaker believers and help them stand and walk in the Lord.
- This kind of personal ministry is not easy, and so Paul added some wise counsel to encourage us.

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Be Patient

(v. 14d)

- It takes patience to raise a family.
- That weaker member who demands much help may one day be a choice leader, so never give up.

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Watch Your Motives

(v. 15)

- Often as we minister to others, they reject us and even oppose us. Often they show no appreciation. But we should always serve in love, and be ready to forgive. *“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone”*.
- Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
- Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God.

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Romans 12:17–21 (NKJV)

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.

20 Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- If your motive is a desire for appreciation and praise, you may be disappointed.

- If your motive is:

2 Corinthians 4:5 (NKJV)

For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

- We will never be disappointed!

Be Joyful

(v. 16)

- Joy takes the burden out of service. “*The joy of the Lord is your strength*” (Neh. 8:10). God loves a cheerful servant as well as a cheerful giver. Every church family has its Doubting Thomas.
- To see them and listen to them is like witnessing an autopsy, or diving into a cold lake on a winter’s day. God wants His family to be happy, and that means that each member must contribute to the joy.

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Four Spiritual Characteristics

- The four spiritual characteristics Paul mentioned are part of the fruit of the Spirit named in Galatians 5:22:
 - Love (*1 Thes. 5:13*)
 - Joy (*1 Thes. 5:16*)
 - Peace (*1 Thes. 5:13*)
 - and Long-Suffering (*1 Thes. 5:14*)

It's All In The Family (*1 Thes. 5:12-18*)

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- We cannot manufacture these spiritual qualities; they only come as we yield to the Spirit and permit Him to control us.
- Family partnership is vital to the health and growth of the church.
- Are you bearing your share of the burdens, or are you merely a spectator who watches the others do the job?

It's All In The Family (1 Thes. 5:12-18)

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