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# 1 THESSALONIANS 5:14

Series: Real Christians in Challenging Times

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we are looking forward to looking at your word now and ask that you would teach us through it. We thank you for so many things that we can learn. We can learn electronically and we thank you for that and for those who are visiting with us on Facebook now – a very important part of our church. And so Lord, we're asking a special blessing on them today. Bless them as a result of their hearing of the word that would change all of our hearts. Thank you for the way that you provide us with your grace in that way. In Jesus' name, amen.

There's a proverb in the Old Testament that goes like this: *Like iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.* The idea of that proverb is that when people interact together they sharpen each other. I don't think that means we become more sharp in the way we communicate, that is edgy in our communication, I think what it means we're stimulated to grow. We're encouraged by the things we hear. We rise to the next level of our personal development as we're trying to understand more about what God has for us and we do that in interactions. One of the benefits to coming to church is that we're interacting together. Iron sharpens iron.

Now Paul is going to share with us in 1 Thessalonians, this passage that we're going to look at today, 1 Thessalonians 5, he tells us more about what this looks like to sharpen one another. So we're going to look at the third of ten principles. If you open your book, this book here, I'm going to be reading out of here myself. I'll also throw some slides up on the screen that will help you to follow along. But if you look at 1 Thessalonians 5:14, that's where you can write. I'm going to give you some specific things to write down there that I think will be helpful for you as we go through this passage. There are ten things in particular that are listed in this passage that you're going to go back to over and over again. These ten things characterize us as Christians. It's kind of like a report card, but more importantly these things will help you to know this is what it means to serve the Lord. This is what it means to focus in on what it means to be a Christian.

The first thing we talked about is that Christians live well under authority. Authority has its challenges. Sometimes we have to disagree with authority or we have to practice civil disobedience or something like that. Sometimes we have to appeal to authority. But there's this general sense of we understand authority. That's what we learned two weeks ago in that first week.

Now last week we talked about the second one, which is in verse 13. Live peaceably, as you see in the passage there. Live peaceably. We talked about what that looks like. I gave an illustration. Remember last week... How many were able to listen last week online? Okay, so if you heard

me talk last week I talked about my doctor that I had twenty-five years ago and he invited me to be a part of some stress management program that he was running. I was a little weary about that because he's not a Christian. So I was concerned. But in the course of time he became a Christian and I learned a tremendous amount from him in the midst of that.

Well my wife, unbeknownst to me, sent an email to Dr. Jass telling him, "Hey, Scott talked about you in the sermon." Now if anybody says "Scott talked about you in the sermon" then you want to go hear what the sermon is. Right? So he went and listened to the sermon. He sent an email. I'm going to read it to you in just a moment.

But I want you to know what happens. After the sermon is recorded... So it's being recorded here on Facebook Live, it's being recorded by Peter there at the table, and then it's put up on our blog. Another person, whose name is Mila, creates an image to go with the sermon. Then Dave Urbanski creates a blog. He's a writer. So every week he creates a blog article that summarizes or relives about listening to the sermon. Then Fiona for the last seven years she's been taking the sermon once it's up, she downloads it, she transcribes the whole thing so it's all there. So if you go to our Take Jesus Home website blog, you'll see all the sermons there. I'd encourage you, if you hear one that particularly would be good for someone to hear, send them the link so they can go directly to it and hear it.

Carrie sent the email to Dr. Jass and told him about this. He responded this way. "First, thank you for sending me the video. It was wonderful to hear and see Scott again. Makes me regret even more moving down to South Jersey. Scott neglected to say anything about how I came to Christ, especially his critical role in that. I remember sensing his reluctance to hear about my stress management program at the time. But I am sure his willingness to open his heart to hear about what I had to say helped me open my heart to hear and accept Christ through him. It was also Scott who helped me understand that my program was not stress management, but on a step on the path toward peace Scott discussed so eloquently in his sermon. The peace that surpasses all understanding. And that listening deeply within, as I now do much better with Scott's help, is at least part of the answer to the riddle of how to pray without ceasing. Blessings on both of you and your ministry. [signed] Dan."

I share that with you in part because in a couple weeks we're coming to that verse pray without ceasing. And he's saying that this idea of living peaceably in the moment – what does that look like in the moment – is part of this bigger picture. I hadn't thought about that, but I believe it's true. So we come to that part about praying without ceasing shortly. We'll look at that some more and we'll talk about it.

Today we're going to look at this idea of to be wise people helpers. We're going to talk about relationships and how we can help people. But we can help people that are in our family and we can help people that are in our church and we can help people outside of that. So those are the arenas I'm thinking about. They are in our passage today as we look at it. Three principles from God's word in verse 14 and one secret weapon.

Let's read the passage out of 1 Thessalonians 5:14. *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.* There are three principles there and one secret weapon that we're going to talk about today.

The first thing I want to say here about this passage though is that as Paul is writing this he lists these three things, but he's talking to brothers. Notice he says – *And we urge you, brothers.* So he's talking to believers. The Christian community is one of those places where the way we talk is really important because we are passing on God's grace. That God's grace passes through you and me to other people. I'm really grateful for the people through whom God's grace passes to me. We're going to learn today more about what that looks like.

But I want you to notice in the verse there are three different kinds of people mentioned. There's the idle, the fainthearted, and the weak. So you've got to know who you're talking about. So in some sense you have to make an evaluation. You have to not treat everybody the same. There's some times where we treat everybody equally. But there's some times when we treat everybody differently because they need something different from us. Parents know that if they have more than one child. You try to treat them all equally then you've got these kids saying that's not fair, that's not fair. They need to be treated specially, uniquely. So we apply that specifically to them.

Which brings me to the question, and I think an important thing I just want to briefly clarify for you, and it has to do with this idea of judging other people. Do we as Christians judge? Well I would say in a very real sense we have to be careful. Jesus said these words – *Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.* So Jesus is saying be careful about judging. Don't judge people because you're going to be judged by the same way. So you better be careful about that. He further clarifies though in John 7:24 – *Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.* So there's a way that we can evaluate what's going on that goes beyond the surface. I think in part what he's saying is don't be a hypocrite and try to judge people when you yourself also have issues that need to be addressed. But what he's also saying here is that there's an appearance that people put out there and we need to be wise enough to look past that appearance to what's going on deeper on the inside. When we do that then we're going to choose which tool from the toolbox we're going to apply to our work with that particular person. He gives us three tools that we're going to talk about as we go through this passage.

The first one is the tool called admonish. So this word *admonish* is a real special word. It's the word *noutheto*. You can write that down. If you ask me how do you spell a Greek word, it's a Greek word, so I can spell it in Greek, but what you want to do is just make it up in English. That's what anybody else does. *Noutheto*. So write it down. Underline the word *admonish*, draw a line to the other side of your page, and write *noutheto* there. *Noutheto* means to try to change someone's mind by teaching. Bringing the truth through teaching to change someone's mind. That's what it means. Bringing the truth through teaching to change someone's mind. Admonish. It's a beautiful word because what it does is it communicates this idea that we have God's word and we have this person over here and if they just knew this piece of truth it would help them a little bit in their own lives. Admonish.

The word *noutheto* is a word that has come into the English language when we get counseling. So if you're looking for a counselor to get some help and you look for a biblical counselor, often they'll say they are a nouthetic counselor. A nouthetic counselor is someone who takes God's word and applies it to life situations. An example of this is Lorraine Brocious. She's a member of our church. She had a counseling profession before she came to Calvary Chapel Living Hope, but when she moved down here she didn't take it on formally, but she still works with people individually. If you need counseling, she is available to meet with you. I don't know how we're going to work it out now that we've got the whole COVID thing, but we'll be back. But you can communicate with her and she does nouthetic counseling. That's what she does. It ties into God's word and applying it to life.

We all need this, but there's this other kind of person mentioned. If you look in the verse it says *admonish the idle*. It gives the impression there are people who are not working and taking advantage of other people. So he's saying admonish those people. And that's a good group of people to work with and admonish. But the word there for *idle* is out of order. So let's broaden this a little bit. You can admonish anybody who's out of order. When we say out of order what we mean is that they're not in step with the Spirit. They're not in step with what God has for them. They're out of order. When you're out of order (and I think we all get out of sorts sometimes), we need someone to come along and admonish us with the truth so that we can get back in line, we can get back in order. So if there's something about your life that's not orderly, you just need to know God's word is so powerful and brings about this very important aspect of our lives that we need God's truth to change our mind often through teaching. Admonish.

Now in my own life I think about admonish. Somehow I don't know how I picked this up, but when I think about admonish I think a little bit of harshness in there. That admonish someone means that you're kind of hitting them hard or something like that. I want to counter that idea by looking at two other passages of scripture. Both of these passages use the word admonish. I want you to see them because they give us some understanding of how we can do that better. If you're going to be a good people helper you're going to want to know how to admonish. Here are some verses.

The first one uses the exact same word in 1 Corinthians 4:14. Paul says – *I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved child*. So we don't have this ashamed picture that's going on. So if you have in your mind admonish means to shame someone, then you're missing what the word means because Paul fills it out here. He says I'm not trying to make you feel ashamed. What I want you to do is I want you to be like a little child that was loved by the parent who comes along and says, "Hey, I think you're out of line here. I want to help you with this." So the idea of admonish, there's a gentleness. There's a gentle way of sharing God's word with someone and saying hey, this is something that you need. I want to share this with you. This is a tool that we develop.

The second verse I want to share with you is in Colossians 3:16 which says this. Because this tells you how you're going to be more effective in doing this. It says this: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*. That's what you start with. See if you're going to be able to admonish someone, then to share God's word with them so it touches their heart it has to start with you. That we each need to be able to let the word of God dwell in us richly. This idea that we're

saturated with God's word. The reason you spend time reading the Bible every day, when you get up, when you go to bed, or sometime in the middle, you're reading the Bible not only for yourself because you need it for yourself, but you're reading it so you have something, some richness out of which you speak to someone else and you share something with them.

So then he goes on to say once you have this richness of the word inside of you then you can *teach and admonish one another with wisdom*. Wisdom is skill. This ability to pull out the right things to say at the right times. We all need that. If we're going to be good people helpers, we're going to take God's word and apply it in a very specific way.

The verse fills out because it really talks about how we interact together. This is the benefits of coming and gathering together. Here's what happens. You receive *admonishing and teaching*, but you also *sing hymns and psalms and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God*. This is just such a great verse that describes what we do when we come together, the beauty of experiencing this. I need this in my life.

I am so glad when God passes His grace through someone and I get to hear the whisper of God that says, "Be at peace in your life. You need this." It reminds me that joy is a primary something that I need to be working on in my life. Joy. God speaks through people to admonish me, to put me in order when I get out of order, when I'm out of sorts. You know that. You know when you're out of sorts. And when that takes place you want to be with other believers who say, "You know what, I think you're off here. I think you're going to want to..." That's admonishing. That's one of the things that we do. These words all characterize us. If you're a Christian, then these things in this passage characterize you. The first tool that you have in your toolbox if you're going to be a good people helper or a wise people helper is to admonish.

The second one that we're going to look at in the verse is to *encourage the fainthearted*. Now the word *encourage* there has the idea of comfort or console. First of all you've got to know that there's another tool in the toolbox. Because there are some people that you've heard the saying "if your only tool is a hammer, then everything you see is a nail." So you're just going to hit it with a nail every time. So if your only tool is to admonish and that's all you're using, then you're going to miss out on the benefits of the tools that are available.

Another one of the tools that we have to have in our toolbox if we're going to be wise people helpers is this idea of encouraging. Now the word means to comfort or console. Now how do you know when to use this tool? Comfort and console. Well it's with these people who are the fainthearted.

Fainthearted. I have a hard time with that word, but the Greek word is *oligopsuchos*. *Oligop* means to minimize. *Suchos* means your soul. To minimize your soul. *Oligopsuchos*. So when someone's soul is diminished, that means their very soul doesn't have what it needs to meet the challenges of life. They are these people, the fainthearted. *Oligopsuchos*. The ones whose souls are just diminished for the moment and they need something. What do they need in that moment? What they need is comfort. What they need is encouragement. I like to use the word *oligopsuchos*. Instead of fainthearted I like the word overwhelmed. So when you see someone

who's overwhelmed, what they really need is someone to come alongside of them and comfort them. It is another tool in the toolbox.

Now I don't know if this happens to you guys, but it happens to me. Sometimes I come in, my wife starts telling me a problem. She's telling me that she's got this certain issue. What do I do? I go into problem-solving mode. I know exactly how to fix this problem. If she'd just do this then the problem wouldn't be here anymore. So I start problem-solving and she says this to me: "I can solve my own problem. I just need for you to listen to me. I just need for you to comfort me and encourage me."

We've got to know to shift gears. We've got to know there's more tools in the toolbox. This is a very important one. A tool that has to do with not just coming in and admonishing, although that's a valuable tool. Another one where we just comfort someone and listen to them, care for them. When we comfort them then good things can happen in that dynamic. We're being a good people helper and we don't have to be in problem-solving mode to do that.

The third tool in the toolbox that's mentioned in this passage is to *help the weak*. The word *help* is not this occasionally drive by and hand some money out of the window kind of help. This is the word – *help* means to come along, support someone. It implies the idea of commitment. So when someone is hurting and they need help, they're weak, the idea of weak has to do with they can't walk by themselves easily. That's what weak means. So when someone can't walk by themselves easily, you come along and you support them, you help them. I'm going to walk along this journey with you. I'm going to walk with you in this challenge that you're experiencing so that you can enjoy this life, you can enjoy, you can make it through, you can deal with the challenges. I know that there are some folks here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope that have some particular challenges and others have come along to walk with them. I will walk with you in this path. That's the other tool that's being talked about here that we help the weak. Those are three tools. Okay, we've look at three tools which are admonish, the comfort, and the help.

Now I want to tell you a story about this young man who's twelve years old that I'm working with now. Great guy. He lives in Texas in a family of eight children. Now if you live in a family with eight children you have plenty of opportunity to learn a lot and to realize that all kinds of people are different. Sometimes there are people that are irritating and annoying. So I'm trying to help him know that. He's the oldest of the twelve of the eight kids. He's twelve. That means they've got eight kids under the age of thirteen. Alright.

So anyway. I'm helping this young man and he has a particular challenge with his nine-year-old sister. I said to him, "Yeah. We all have challenges with people and this is an opportunity to work with her and learn about her. So here's your assignment. I want you to go in to your sister." He has a lot of conflict with his sister. "Try to get in and out of a session with her for five minutes without any conflict. So she's happy when you're done. Five minutes in and out." Well he says, "I can't do that. That's impossible because she's...." and he goes on to tell me about her problems.

I said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. Stop, stop, stop. You're saying it wrong. I'm going to change what you're saying because you're saying it wrong. What you're doing is you're telling me all about

her problems and how she's impossible to deal with. Okay. You're saying it wrong. Here's what you need to say. You need to say this: 'I haven't yet developed the skills to work with this kind of a person.' See if you say it that way you're taking responsibility. I know that you're twelve now and God has placed you in this family for a purpose. God wants to do some great things in your life as a result of this. So I'm going to send you away to do this."

So he goes away, the first week he comes back. He says, "I can't do this. She is..." I said, "Wait, wait. Remember the 'she is...' You've got to take responsibility." So I sent him away the second week. "Go figure out a way that you can relate to her and get in and out of a situation for just five minutes."

The next week I was so pleased because here's a guy who wants to grow. Here's a guy who wants to learn. He's twelve. He's learning how to relate to people and here's what he said. I said, "What is your secret to success?"

He says this: "First of all, I knew I had to be calm." He's kind of an intense guy like I am, so I can imagine that sets her off. He's got to change the patterns. "I have to be calm. So I was calm and I just went in and I sat by her. And then when I saw her doing something I tried to help her." Tool number three. Remember helper. "I tried to help her do something. That seemed to be going pretty well, so I left." Five minutes he got in and out of there because he changed the tool. I've just got to suggest if there's someone in your life that's creating a problem for you, maybe you need to change the tool. In this case he's going to be really successful.

So this week I sent him... There's another child that creates some challenges for him. He's going to work with his four-year-old brother. I'm eager to see how he works with the four-year-old so that we can get through that. He's learning how to relate to people.

God brought you here to this church so you can develop your people skills. Because there are some people in church that you'd rather not sit by. Right? But there's opportunities that we all have that we can grow in our relationships. So we practice this. Not only in church. You practice it in your home, you practice it at work. There's tools. As Christians we have different tools in the toolbox that we can use in order to move forward.

Well we haven't talked about the secret weapon yet, so let's go there. Because the last one in the passage is the secret weapon: *be patient with them all*.

Now I am one of those people that I get my blood drawn often intentionally. At least every six months, sometimes every quarter. Especially when I'm working on something in my body. I want to know what my A1C is, I want to know what my triglycerides are, I want to know what my enzymes are for my kidneys or my liver because all that's reported in these blood results. I like to know that because it gives me this statement and it helps me then adjust. Because I don't want to wait till I have a big problem. I want to adjust when I've got a small problem. So I can look at the numbers and often make an adjustment.

I want to ask you to do something today. I want you to evaluate your *makrothumia*. Okay. Evaluate your *makrothumia*. That's patience. Write that word down. *Makrothumia*. It is the word patience. What Paul is saying is we all need to have a high level of this because when we don't

have a high level of this then what's going to happen is the relationships are going to get damaged, problems are going to take place. We must have a high level of *makrothumia* in our lives in order to be successful. That's because *makrothumia* or patience is the shock absorber in relationships. We must have this in our lives in order to be effective in our dynamics. So this applies to everybody. We all need it. Give it to us. Everybody needs this experience. So when it says there *be patient with all...* you know what the Greek word *all* means? It means all. Everyone. Everyone needs this. So we give them this little bit more.

You know that I've been telling you about the pieces of this personal study I'm doing in my own life on the fruit of the Spirit and each time I come to a different part of the fruit of the Spirit then I'm creating these circles. I showed you the circle about joy, I showed you the circle about love, and last week I showed you the circle about peace. These are my kind of analysis of the Bible, what the Bible is saying about this. If you want to develop peace in your life we talked about last week you have to release something, you have to receive something, you have to practice it. That was the peace cycle because that's what I see taught in God's word in regards to peace.

Now I want to show you the patience one. This is the fourth one in the fruit of the Spirit. It seems like a good time to talk about it because that's the word in our passage. When I look at God's word and try to understand what patience is, it seems that it has these three to-do things that you can put into practice in your own life. Three things that you can do. One of them is to remain calm. You get that impression. When someone is patient they're calm. Right? There's this remaining calm that seems to take place in the word patience in the Bible. The second is extending time. So this is the idea when God is patient with us that means He's extending time to us. And this is important. If you're trying to be patient with someone you want to give them a little bit more time. If you're trying to have patience with life, you want to give it a little bit more time. Time is important. And the third one is enduring pain. So if you're suffering with something then you want to be patient in the midst of suffering. So we see in Romans 5:3-5 that patience is developed through suffering. So we endure being in pain.

Now take those words and think about them for a moment. When God has patience with us He does these three things. He remains calm, as we might imagine Him doing so. He extends us time. And He endures the pain of our rebellion or our immaturity. When we're patient with life, we wish life would go faster, we're tired of waiting, we want the results and we want to get to this new stage or whatever it is and we develop patience, we're dealing with this remaining calm, extending time and enduring pain. When I say enduring pain it could be actual physical pain that you're enduring because of the suffering you're experiencing in your body because you have something wrong with it. In the midst of that you're trying to be patient in that experience. But sometimes you're just trying to be patient with someone who's annoying or irritating. When your frustration starts to build you know you need *makrothumia*. *Makrothumia* helps you when you're starting to get upset. It keeps you calm. It allows you to extend time.

I have a particular man in my life that I don't talk to very often, but as I do he and I get into conflict regularly. I mean we've had some really heated exchanges together. More recently I've realized that I can make an adjustment to that. Because what I realize is that he likes to talk. He explains something in the long version. He gives you a page where I could say in a sentence. In fact I already know what he said long before he's done talking, so I just want to give him an

answer. So I will sometimes interrupt him and give my answer. And then he doesn't feel understood and so he raises his voice, and I raise my voice, and we get into this conflict.

I decided I don't like this about myself. I don't want to do this. So what I started doing with him is I started listening to him until he's done talking. I just listen and I listen and I listen. When he's finally done talking and there's a pause, then I can start talking. But first I repeat what he said. "Okay so what you're saying is this. I got that." And then I start talking. This has totally diffused our relationship. We're not yelling at each other anymore. There's a calmness in our dynamic. It's because I have tied in my spirituality into this particular relationship and I am being more calm in that interaction, more patient. My *makrothumia* level needed to increase and I'm allowing it to do so in that particular dynamic.

So I just wanted to share that one image with you because I think it might be helpful as you're trying to develop patience in your own life. The summary here, basically what God is saying is that in order to be a wise people helper, we want to learn that there are three different things that we can do, three tools in the toolbox mentioned here – admonish, to comfort, and to help. We're going to do that based on our evaluation of the situation. Because sometimes the very same person needs a different approach than they did yesterday. So we want to have these versatile tools that we can use. And then there's this secret weapon to be patient with all of it. That's what God would have for all of us. He wants us to grow in that.

Now I want you to pause for a moment and just think of God's relationship with you. Because God wants to treat you as an individual. He doesn't treat us like social security numbers. He doesn't treat us the same. There are some things that are the same about all of us. We all come to the cross the same. He's created everyone in the image of God. But when it comes to the interactions of each of our lives, He treats us in different ways. He gives us what we need. Sometimes He admonishes us and He gives us His words to train us and to teach us. Sometimes He comes alongside the Holy Spirit. You know that name for the Holy Spirit in John 16 is the Helper. He comes alongside of us to help us. Another one is the Comforter. He takes up these words. He guides us into all truth. The Holy Spirit does all of these things in our lives. As we're connected with the Holy Spirit He just enables us in some great ways to experience God in a super way.

I just want to encourage you to experience God's grace in this way. When you do, enlarge your toolbox and then be this wise people helper that God wants you to be to reach out, touch other people, and allow God to pass His grace through you. Because it's just like the proverb said – *Like iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another*. God will use us in our lives to do that. I trust that God will do that in your heart as well.

Let's stand together and let's pray.

This is your opportunity if you're 10-14 years old, you can go right out the back there with your teacher and you'll be able to talk about the message together and the things that you've learned.

Let's pray.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we are grateful for your love for us and the way that you treat us in special ways, uniquely, just what we need. Lord, we need your touch now. We thank you that you know us. Each sheep that wanders away you come and minister to us just the way we need it. Lord, we thank you that you are our God, that you are protector, that you are our truth. We rely on you and trust you.