

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 - Don't Be A Jerk!

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[0 : 00] It's good to see everyone. Good morning. Welcome. We are in our study this morning of 1 Thessalonians with a thirt rather than a fur. It's just my pompy upbringing. Still can't shake it.

! First Thessalonians. And you know, interesting week, huh? So last week teaching on the rapture of the church and in this week I feel like we've got a step closer.

Right? You know, the nations of Iran, Gog and Magog, match it up with Ezekiel 38, 39. Jesus is on the way. Right? So watch the news with your Bible in your hands. Right?

And so, anyway, that was last week. This week we're going from one controversial subject to another, which you'll be mightily pleased about. So last week it was the rapture of the church and this week it is spiritual gifts. And it's, I would actually hasten to say that it's actually a small part of what Paul is going to talk about in this section.

And as I was thinking about, you know, looking at and kind of praying over the kind of theme, if you like, I was trying to think of some titles that might kind of wrap up kind of what we are seeing in these verses.

[1 : 27] And so I came up with loads. Some I'm not going to share. So what is Paul saying? He's saying this. And you can take any of these as a title.

When you come to church, be a Christian. Ouch. Like some of you are like, I know where this is going. Okay, so this is Christian adulating for dummies.

Or whilst we wait for Jesus, don't be difficult. So the reason for those titles is because as we come to the end of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul wants to leave these Christians with a picture of what they should be doing.

Right. So he's kind of been saying, this is your future. This is this is where we're going. We're going to spend eternity with Jesus. Jesus is coming back. And he's like, yeah, but while you wait for Jesus to come back, please don't be difficult.

Right. Please don't be a dummy. Please be an adult. Please be a Christian adult. Right. So he's kind of giving them. Look, this is what this is how a good church should function.

[2 : 55] And actually, he's carrying on the command in verse 11 of chapter five. If you look there where he says, encourage one another and build each other up. And you can almost imagine the conversation that's going on in Paul's mind where he would kind of say, preempt the Thessalonians. Like, how do we do that?

What does that look like? How do we encourage one another and build each other up? And so in this section, he's telling us how to do that. Like, while we wait, what are we supposed to be doing while we wait?

And of course, there are more things that we are supposed to be doing than just found in this this chapter or the last part of this chapter. But he's going to essentially really kind of give us two things.

Just two things. And he's going to say, firstly, respect and esteem Christian leaders. That's verse 12 and 13. And then secondly, be at peace among yourself.

And that's 13 to 24, I think. And then the closing comments are at the end. Right. So look at it. Verse 12. He says, I ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

[4 : 15] And to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And then kind of the rest of the chapter, he's kind of going to tell us, well, how can we be at peace amongst ourselves? Right. So.

He's addressing the congregation. We ask you, brothers. And he gives them two things. Notice that he says, firstly, he's addressing them and how their relationship is with their leaders.

And then he's addressing them about how their relationship is with others in the church. And so the first thing he says, notice in verse 12, we ask you, brothers, to respect.

That word respect is absolutely loaded with meaning. It's a Greek word that literally means to know or to have knowledge about something. And if you would then just flick down to verse 13, because Paul not only says to respect, but to esteem them or consider them very highly in love.

So this is the fundamental first part of what Paul is saying is, while you wait, here's how I want you to treat your Christian leaders. And notice that he doesn't say, and we're going to notice a number of things that he doesn't say.

[5 : 25] And actually, most of this is put in the negative in this part of the chapter. He doesn't say, idolize your leaders. He doesn't say, flatter your leaders. He doesn't say, treat them like they're untouchable.

He says, love them well. See, in the text, Paul uses the word, those, respect those.

And then in verse 13, he uses the word, them, esteem them. And you might say, okay, well, who are the those that we should know? And who are the them that we should esteem very highly?

And actually, the answer is threefold. It's not just as easy as just saying Christian leaders. So he's going to say three things. He's going to say, respect and esteem highly those who labor among you, those who are over you, and those who admonish you.

Those three categories. So let's pick those apart. The word labor just means to be tired from work. Everybody knows that feeling, right? Paul isn't pointing to leaders who are flashy, great communicators, famous, have loads of YouTube followers who are fun, able to pull out a pun.

[6 : 42] None of those. That's not what is on Paul's mind. What is on Paul's mind is that leaders who are faithful, who are quietly and consistently laboring in love for the good of the church.

He isn't even pointing to those particularly who are good at it. Right? He's not saying, oh, I want you to respect those who are really good at it.

He's not saying that. He's saying, I want you to respect those who are tired to the point of exhaustion. In the Greek, the Greek word is kopiantos, and it means a sacrificial, exhausting labor.

Okay? So this is often used with parents, with children. Parents, you are...

Yeah. Parents, you work till you are exhausted for the good of your children. And this is what Paul is describing.

[8 : 00] He's saying that these people are up late, praying, up early, preparing. They are counseling. They are organizing. They are cleaning. They are visiting. They are leading. Remember what Paul wrote in chapter 2.

He said in verse 9, For you, remember, brothers, our labor and toil. We worked night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you the gospel of God.

And look, it's interesting. It's an interesting reflection of mine to read what Paul thought of his own ministry. How we evaluated God's use of him, if you like.

Because at times, Paul looked at a church, didn't he? And we've talked about this before. He looked at a church and he said, like, he said things like he said to the church of Philippi.

He says, Like, I don't know a huge amount of pastors that can say that.

[9 : 06] That's just the honest truth. Like, normally when pastors get together, it's like, oh, I've got this problem. I've got that problem. I've got this. I've got that.

I've got this dummy. I've got this child, this immature Christian. Whatever it is, right? But Paul, in evaluating God's use of him, he would look to some of his churches and some of the people that he's helped and he would go, I love you.

I long to be with you. You are what makes me joyous. You are my reward. Again, he says the same, similar thing to the church he's writing to here.

In chapter 2, he says in verse 19, For what is our hope or joy? Or crown of boasting? Like, what is there to boast about? Then he goes, Oh, it's you, isn't it? And then, yeah, at other times, Paul had some really sad things to say about the people he was addressing.

Like, at one point, Paul wrote to the church at Galatia in Galatians chapter 4 and he confessed that he feared to have labored over them in vain. Like, how sad is that? He looked to them and the hard work that he had put in and wondered whether the sacrifice was actually worth it.

[10 : 28] And again, I know a lot of pastors and all of them would confess that at points in their ministry, in their ministry, those words haven't been far from their own thoughts. And so Paul says that the church is to respect those who are tired from labor.

Not tired in labor, but tired from labor. And then he gives more clarity about who the those and the them are. He says, Those who are over you in the Lord.

And so that word over means literally to lead, manage, or rule. Now, there's parts of us that don't like that, do we? Like, in our rebellion, we don't want anyone to lead, manage, or rule over us while we're independent people.

And that's partly because of the fall. We don't see any need for anyone to lead, manage, or rule. And yet this is God's way. And there's always been some tension in the church about leadership.

Always. As there is in business, as there is in other sectors, there's always a tension. And sometimes in church history, we see leaders placed in exalted positions that are not biblical.

[11 : 40] And then we, other times in church history, we see the church abandon the idea of leadership altogether. And those two extremes are extremes, and that's always a temptation for the church.

But Paul wants us to understand that neither one is right. God has placed and called leaders within his church to lead, manage, and rule his church.

But notice that this isn't about the leaders. And we'll get to that in September when we look at Paul's letter to Timothy. This is an exhortation to the church.

This isn't an opportunity for the church to go, oh yeah, but if I had a leader like X, Y, Z, I would then respect, esteem, whatever. This is an exhortation to the church because the church has a responsibility towards those who are over them in the Lord.

And so those, in verse 12, are those who lead, manage, or rule. And then the next thing Paul says about those is that they are ones who admonish you, which means to teach about proper behaviour.

[12 : 54] Paul wrote to the church of Corinth and said to them in 1 Corinthians 4, he says, I don't write these things, I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as beloved children.

It is to teach, if you like, the how-tos of the Christian life. So when Paul, in verse 12, says, we ask you brothers to respect those, and in the next verse he says, and to esteem them very highly in love, that those and the them are those who labour among you, those who lead, manage, and rule, and those who are teaching the how-tos of the Christian life.

And it couldn't be clearer. And then, in verse 13, he moves to talk about how the congregation can look after each other. And this is really, this is really the difficult part.

Like, I'm not going to suggest that any of this is easy. If it was easy, it wouldn't be in here. Like, if we didn't need reminding, chapter 5 wouldn't exist.

But the fact that it's here, and it's not the only place that it's here, is littered throughout the New Testament, is a reminder to our own heart. So, he says at the end of verse 13, to be at, or to keep, the peace among yourselves.

[14 : 25] Like, that's just convicting. Like, it doesn't even need an exhortation right there, does it? He says, be at peace among yourselves. And the thing, like, I'd really like us to think about, in terms of that idea that it's here because it needs to be here, like, the instructions are here because we need it, is that real church is sometimes a messy affair, but real peace is intentional.

Like, you have to go out of your way to keep the peace. It doesn't happen automatically. Division happens automatically. We have to be intentional about keeping peace because in verse, in the rest of the chapter, Paul then gives us four ways in which we can do that.

He doesn't say, now you're Christian, you know how to behave. Like, as if that was a thing, right? Now you're born again, you've got all your behaviors down and you're perfectly adequate to look after yourselves and live in harmony and peace and unity with each other without any problems whatsoever.

He doesn't say that. Now he says, look, everyone's, everyone's got someone at church who gets on their nerves. Like, I'm just calling it.

And Paul says, that person you've got to especially love. So, everything he now says is in the plural, which means it's for us.

[16 : 22] It's about how we as a group of people behave when we come together. It's not about you per se as an individual.

individual. It is, because obviously as a group of individuals we make up the whole. But this is about how we as a group of people act and behave when we gather.

Either on a Sunday morning, for example, or in our life group meetings midweek. Okay? And look at the language. He writes, he writes about prophecy later on.

That's a church gathering thing. He writes about how we are to greet one another in verse 26. Well, we greet one another as we come together. He writes about the public reading of this letter in verse 27.

So, this is all about gathering together. So, look, verse 14, he 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 evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

[17 : 31] And everybody is thinking, Simon, I thought you said there were four things. And I can count, and that's more than four. So, this is a group of things.

You're like, I knew that was a catch. So, verses 14 and 15 are grouped together into relational behaviors. So, the first thing that Paul wants us to understand, the first thing he wants us to do is to keep the peace relationally.

And he gives us a number of things in verses 14 and 15 that are going to help us to do that. And the first one is to admonish the idle. Same word that we saw before about admonishing, teach the right behaviors to the idle.

Or actually, a better word than idle, because we think, oh, lazy. It can be translated that way, but actually, it's more undisciplined. I don't know whether that's better or worse.

Right? So, in keeping the context of keeping the peace, this is about those who perhaps break their commitments too often. Right?

[18 : 46] This is the person who is, you need to know, you need to know, there are no fingers pointed anywhere apart from here. Okay?

So, like, if you get hit this morning, it's not intentional in that way. Right? But this is the person, for example, who is regularly late for church with no good reason, and someone has to accommodate them in some way.

Right? This is the person who regularly forgets their slot on the rotor, and someone has to fill in at the last minute. This is the person who is more of the consumer than the contributor, always critiquing what is wrong, but never lifting a finger to help or change.

Because all this does is breed cynicism and burns out those who are trying. See, the action of the idol, the action of the undisciplined, is to create a church at war, not at peace.

Because sooner or later, you stop showing up for your rotor, and someone has to fill in, that person's going to do what? He's going to resent you, isn't he? Right? And so, the actions of an admonisher is to create peace within the church.

[20 : 09] Because what are they doing? They're coming alongside and going, dude, why are you always late? How can I help with that? Do you need a lift? Do you want me to call you? What time do you want me to call you?

Is five early enough? Yeah, amen. And so, they are challenging those behaviours.

Now, you might say, that ain't my job. And I will say, sorry, Paul says, that is your job, as the church, is to admonish the undisciplined.

Now, that is not to take them outside and beat them. That is not what we're saying. Right? Give them a holy smoking. That's not what we're saying. We're saying is, we're saying, dude, I noticed this about your life.

I noticed that you have a heart to do what's right, but you're unable to walk this way. How can I assist you? That's different, man. You're always late.

[21 : 14] Sort your life out. I keep picking up your tab, but I'm sick of it. Right? That's not going to create peace. Just FYI. So, there is this admonishing that we are all supposed to do.

But it's not just this, it's relational behaviors. Another relational behavior, encourage the faint-hearted. Literally, that word faint-hearted is the small of soul. Love that.

We are to encourage the small of soul. A few months back, we were looking at Barnabas, weren't we? Do you remember? Barnabas was someone who was particularly known as someone who encouraged the small of soul.

And the word encourage just means to come alongside and give strength. And what we especially see is that it strengthens in the area of God's purposes. It's not just to come alongside and go, I see you've had a haircut.

Looks great. Got a new shirt on today? You look amazing. You've lost some weight? Well done. It's none of that. This is to come alongside and help people to keep going with God's purposes for them.

[22 : 27] Especially when things get difficult. Especially when things are different or disappointing. It's to help someone step into God's purposes. That too creates peace in the church.

Then Paul says help the weak. And that especially refers to those who are either physically disabled in some way. This is not spiritually weak.

It's not a reference to Romans 14. This is those who are physically weak or economically disadvantaged. It was used in Acts chapter 6 where the early church were forced to implement a management system to help the feeding program.

Because there's a whole bunch of people being left out. And they started saying this isn't right. Why are these people being left out of the feeding program? And so the leaders came together and they appointed, they fixed it by appointing people to oversee that ministry.

And that's what it means to help the weak. It means to help those who are physically disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged. And then he says the phrase that we all love to hate, be patient with all of the above.

[23 : 51] None of us like that word patience. It is clearly needed however, isn't it? Patience.

Patience. I always think, how do you measure patience? Like if you think you've been patient, you probably haven't been patient yet.

Right? Well I've been patient, I've waited two years. Well wait some more. Learn patience. Which is clearly needed for the kind of vision that Paul has about peace.

Right? How to maintain peace, how to keep unity, guess what you need? Guess what I need? Patience. Paul previously wrote to Galatians in chapter 5.

He said that this kind of peace and patience is a work of the Holy Spirit. And you know, this is a good thing to us consider about the work of the Holy Spirit when we talk about not quenching the Holy Spirit later on.

[25 : 02] Paul says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace and patience. Interesting that they go hand in hand. And then verse 15, it's almost like we get an expression of patience.

What does it mean to be patient? Well, see that no one repays evil for evil. But always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. God, I And look, none of this is unique to the church of Thessalonians, is it?

I mean, if it was, it'd be a pretty short sermon. We could just like, they've got lots of problems. Glad we're not like that. We know, we recognize these needs, don't we?

Like he wrote to the church of Colossians and he says, bear with one another. Bear with one another. not just, I was going to say, not just avoid, but it's not just.

Don't avoid one another. Life can be easy if you avoid people. Amen? Right? But he doesn't say that. He doesn't say avoid people. He says, bear with them. If anyone has a complaint against one another, get what you have to do.

[26 : 20] Forgive them. There's not a lot of that around, is there? He says, above all of these things, put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony or in perfect peace.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which you are indeed called into one body. Be thankful. It was a problem of the church of Colossae. It was a problem of the church of Rome because he wrote in Romans chapter 12, live in harmony with one another.

If they were living in harmony with one another, what are you talking about, Paul, if they're already doing that? He says, don't be haughty. Be associated with the lowly.

Don't be wise in your own eyes. Repay no one evil for evil but give thought to what is honourable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Like it needs to be intentional. We need to come in every Sunday morning and go, I need to keep the peace. How do I do that? And so look, having laid out the relational behaviours, which actually most of us would probably recognise as the most difficult kind of behaviours to maintain, having laid out those relational behaviours for what makes peace in the church, he now gives us three more areas for what makes peace in the church.

[27 : 47] And the first one, there in verse 16, is in the area of our worship. Verse 16, rejoice how often? Good, some of you are reading, brilliant.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Three attitudes of joy, prayer and thanksgiving, that should be the predominant theme in our worship.

Again, as we gather as a church. Why? Because look, here's what Paul is trying to relay, I think. He's saying, look, if our attention is on him and our giving thanks is to him, our attention is not griping with each other.

Right? Like at no point anywhere in the Bible are we commanded to come into church and be glum, self-absorbed and arrogant. Like at least I haven't found it in the New Testament.

And in fact, you know, a really, really good practice, if any of you want to try this, a really, really good practice is sometimes you take the words of the Bible and if they're in the positive, turn them into the negative.

[29 : 09] So here's a negative example of that verse. complain constantly, verse 17, stress like it's your full-time job, verse 18, find something to be offended by in every possible scenario because that's exactly what God hopes you do with your life.

Doesn't that bring her home a little bit? And yet, many think this is exactly the call for Christian worship. the psalmist said in Psalm 100, verse 4, he said, when I get to be with the people of God, in the house of God, I'm going to enter those gates with thanksgiving and in his courts with praise and give thanks to him and bless his name.

Paul says, rejoice always. And I'm not suggesting for one minute that that is easy. but it needs to be intentional.

Psalmist said in Psalm 89, he says, happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship. For they will walk in the light of your presence, Lord. They rejoice all day long in your wonderful reputation.

They exult in your righteousness. Again, he wrote in Psalm 16, you make known to me the path of life. In your presence, there is what? There is fullness of joy.

[30 : 43] If you don't know how to worship, can I suggest you start by saying thank you. And then you say thank you again.

And then you just say thank you again. And you keep saying thank you. And sooner or later, you'll find yourself rejoicing. And I think what we miss in so much of our Christian worship, and I am talking about like the 20, 25, 30 minutes of singing that we do on a Sunday.

What we miss so much is our hearts prepared to rejoice. We need to prepare our hearts to rejoice by saying what? Thank you.

Thank you to the Lord. Meditating on his goodness. You've all seen, no doubt. Maybe you haven't. But maybe you have.

And that's why I'm using it as an illustration. I'm just hoping that you have. You've seen that video or videos like it of that giggling baby. You know, there's this baby that just starts giggling.

- [31 : 55] giggling. And sooner or later, you know, the mom starts giggling, the dad starts giggling, and everybody else starts giggling, and no one has a scooby-doo about what they're giggling about.
- But everybody's now laughing. And then you find yourself giggling. There's an experiment on a tube train. I don't know whether you saw that one. Someone just started laughing.
- Hysterically. And then someone else just was laughing at the person laughing. And all of a sudden, this whole carriage of people just laughing. Why? Well, because joy is contagious.
- And this is Paul's point. You come together, and one joyous person will ignite another joyous person. And they'll ignite another joyous person. All of a sudden, you've got a group of people that aren't looking at each other and going, what the heck are they doing?
- You're rejoicing in the Lord. Why do we love baptism so much? Why? Because joy multiplies, doesn't it? And Paul is saying, look, if you, verse 16, complain, verse 17, stress, verse 18, grumble, believing that's what God wants for your life, that's going to have a negative effect on the people around you.
- [33 : 13] Like, if your first words after the worship service are, I didn't like that song, think about that. Because that is contagious. Then look, verse 19, we get another set of behaviors.
- Verse 19, do not quench the spirit, do not despise prophecies, but test everything, hold fast what is good. And so, as we've had a triplet of worship behaviors, now we have another triplet of behaviors that are all about discerning the work of God's spirit.
- Why? Because when we gather, guess who also is here? The Holy Spirit. And notice as well that the first two are in the negative.
- Do not quench the spirit, do not despise prophecies. And so, the thing that Paul is saying is that chaos occurs. And you notice, if you've been around the church longer than 20 minutes, not our church, thankfully, although, maybe, that when God's prophetic word is disregarded, there is chaos.
- But then he says, verse 21, but test everything and hold fast to that which is good. Paul is in no way saying, every single prophecy that is given is going to be good for you, or should even be heard.
- [34 : 52] He says, you need to do, you need to do some discernment. And what is clear, the issue is that problems occur in the gathered church when genuine prophecy is disregarded and false prophecy is not.
- Got it? That's when problems occur. Okay, so what does Paul mean by prophecy? Oh, hello.
- We've got just about time before dinner. And I mean, evening supper. So, look, here's the best definition I know. Prophecy is the God-given ability to speak out of the Bible in a relevant and timely manner.
- If you haven't got that, write that down, because that's super important. Like, here's the best definition I know. Prophecy is the God-given ability, like, you haven't made it up, right?
- You haven't, you know, I don't know, eaten too much pepperoni on your pizza. This is God-given ability to speak out the Bible in a relevant and timely manner. Now, let me unpack that a little bit.
- [36 : 12] So, you know, when you are listening to a sermon, and just the caveat in the days that we're living in, I don't think this really applies. I mean, it could, but it just, I struggle with the idea of YouTube church and prophecy taking place on YouTube.

You can talk to me about that later, that's fine. Prophecy is when you are listening to, most commonly a sermon, and the preacher says something that just resonates with your soul at a really deep level.

It's more than just an agreeing or even a conviction. Way more than that. Because those things, an agreeance with theology or a conviction about what is right and wrong, they are things that are usually true at all time for all people.

This is what is true for you right now. It's time specific. It's something to do with you, and it has something to do with you now.

So let me give you an example. You've got an important decision to make. Not now, don't panic. Some of you are like, what? Some of you have got an important decision to make. Maybe coming up, maybe you're moving house.

[37 : 39] I don't know whether that's true of anyone, but maybe you're in church, you're churned up, maybe you're moving house. Or it's a business decision that has fallen on your shoulders. And you don't know when you're going to move on it, or whether to move forward or to wait.

And someone's sitting next to you right now, right? And you come to church and you're feeling a bit weighed down. And maybe you sit next to someone, me or someone else is preaching and they maybe share Proverbs 21 verse 5, which says, hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.

You're like, dude, that's just answered my question right there. And you take that as a word from God for you in that moment.

It is a truth that is always true. Why? Because it's the Bible. But it is relevant for you to you and timely to you. And look, that's why the quality, and we've talked about this previously, the quality of our communication after service is so important.

That we're talking about godly Bible things. You can't get prophecy by talking about how poorly Southampton Football Club played last week. I mean, it is prophecy in a different way.

[39 : 06] But we won't go there, right? Sorry, Sam. So, prophecy is about calling out the Bible in a way that is timely and relevant to you.

Now, let me quickly tell you that prophecy is often confused. And maybe we should just do a study sometime about spiritual gifts, but I'm seeing some nods, so maybe we'll do that.

This is often confused with another communication gift called words of knowledge. Words of knowledge are spoken words, but they don't quote the Bible.

Fundamental difference, firstly. Prophecy, it's Bible. Words of knowledge, not Bible. And they're where you know something about a situation, even though you haven't been told about that situation.

And this can get you into so much trouble. Like, they're not guesses. They're not baiting the room. We've probably maybe been to services or we've seen them online where someone was like, I have a message.

[40 : 43] It's a message for their name. It has a vowel in it. They're breathing. And they're so vague, it could hear anyone.

So, like, years ago, I went to a youth thing. I took some young people to a youth thing. I don't even know what it was. It's like a service. And the guy stood up. And there's like, maybe 500 14 to 18 year olds.

And the guy stood up and he went, prophecy, there's some people in here that are, you know, behaving in a sexual way that God's not happy with.

And I'm like, dude, they're 14 to 18 year olds. that covers everyone. So it's not, it's not about, it's not guesses, they're not baiting the room, right?

It's, most often, this gift, and actually the gift of prophecy as well, are, are, are personal one-to-one gifts.

[41 : 53] like, if the Holy Spirit has told you, given you an insight about something and someone, he doesn't intend you to throw out a net and go, I'm just, maybe someone, maybe we're going to catch someone.

Like, the Holy Spirit is way more intelligent than that, you know that? Like, he can direct you to the person that he has that word for. And so, you know, when Paul says, when you come together, it should, in, in 1 Corinthians, he said, when, when you come together, it should be for edification, it should be for teaching, which is why, you know, here, we structure our services like we do.

But on multiple occasions, look, just speaking personally, on multiple occasions, I have stumbled into this gift. Unintentionally. It is a, it is a dangerous, dangerous, dangerous, dangerous thing.

Because, like, oftentimes, in the most casual way, this, this word, I've had words of knowledge about things that I have no recollection of, not recollection, I have no knowledge of.

So, I've made a remark, or I've given counsel. I've unknowingly walked into a situation that, A, I haven't been invited into, and I have, I could not have known about.

[43 : 24] And yet, now I'm speaking as though I know. So, for example, maybe over, and this, please still come for coffee. But, like, maybe over, we're chatting over coffee, and we're discussing one thing or another, and, you know, in the past, this has happened, I've said to that person, like, you know, you seem to keep asking God if he's real, and even last night, didn't you, you were laying down on your bed, and you asked God to show him if he was real, and they were like, you've bugged my house, and I'm like, I haven't bugged your house, honestly, and no one's ratting on you either, and you have to explain your way out of it, and promise that you haven't bugged the house.

Words of knowledge, most often don't quote the Bible, but they aren't vague either. These aren't Christian equivalents of horoscopes, or birth stones, or, you know, some of that mumbo jumbo.

It reveals something not previously known to the speaker, and points people to God. Acts chapter 5, Peter knew that Ananias and Sapphira had lied to the Holy Spirit.

How did he know that? The Holy Spirit told him. That's a word of knowledge. Jesus portrays that perfectly in John chapter 4, where he says to the woman at the well, you've said rightly that you don't have a husband because you have five.

That's a word of knowledge. And so Paul says, getting back to it, he says, don't quench or bury, put out the Holy Spirit and don't despise prophecies, but instead test everything and just hold the things which are good for you.

[45 : 21] And the reason he's saying that is because unity and the peace of the church are at stake. And look, in the final set of behaviours, Paul highlights again now what makes for peace and all of these things from verse 22 have to do with holiness and living free from the power of sin.

I mean, they're pretty important if you want to get on with people in church, right? To keep the peace, holiness, living free from the power of sin. And so he says, verse 22, abstain from every form of evil.

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. And he who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

And he will surely do it. And so verse 22, we probably come up against this verse sometimes. It's almost always quoted out of context.

Paul says abstain from every form of evil. There are some that attach this verse to the previous idea so it becomes abstain from every kind of evil profit which I don't really think works.

[46 : 44] others assume it means avoid any behavior that others might perceive as being evil. And that really comes from a really bad translation in the King James version.

Most of the times King James is a good translation sometimes it's really awkward and this is one of those. So there I think it says flee from all appearances of evil. And so not only do we flee from that which is evil we flee from that which appears to be evil or others appear to be evil.

And so for an example don't go to do we have corner shops anymore is that still a thing? If I say corner shop do you know what I mean? Great. I'm not sure corner I don't remember the last time I saw an actual corner shop a shop on a corner but so you know you shouldn't go into a corner shop that sells alcohol because it appears that you're going to get drunk.

Alright? So you shouldn't watch TV because it appears that you're going to watch something inappropriate. This is an appearance of evil. And that view of course makes us slaves to the perception of others and we've talked about that before we please God not man.

there will always be someone who thinks that something you're doing is wrong. Believe you me that's true. There will always be someone who thinks that something you're doing looks wrong.

[48 : 28] Or you should be doing something better. And most of the time in my case they're probably right. I should be doing better. But at the same time we're instructed not to allow our Christian freedom to become a stumbling block like this.

So we need not be legalistic regarding what others may perceive to be evil. But we also need to remain cognate of our witness to the world and our duty to each other.

And this is really what Paul is trying to emphasize. We have a duty to each other. He's acknowledging that there will be some differences of opinion on what the Christian can and cannot do within the gray areas of the Christian life.

It's a reminder isn't it to stay away from sin but also not to become isolationist or legalist in doing so. And there's been many churches ripped apart and I've seen it ripped apart by factions of groups of people who are arguing over some minutiae of Christian living.

But they don't see it as minutiae of Christian living. Of course. And churches have actually closed doors because of it. People have actually and I know this second hand from a pastor.

[50 : 01] people have died because of it. There's an argument in church about some small thing. A guy walked out, he'd already been heated, had a heart attack, dropped down dead in the car park.

That doesn't keep peace, does it? Now I'm not going to say, you know, I'm not going to die because that's just an example.

So, verse 23, everybody's like, verse 23, let's close up. He says, now may the God of peace himself, I love that, may the God of peace himself, the God of peace himself, sanctify, which means to set you apart.

Like the work that God is doing in you and the work that God is doing in me and in us, is that setting apart work. And he says, look, now may the God of peace himself sanctify you partially.

You might get it, you know, by the skin of your teeth. You might get saved, but you're going to be smoking on the way up. No. Paul is confident enough to be able to say that his God, the God of peace himself, will set you apart completely.

[51 : 35] And may your whole spirit, soul, and body, and you can take that as a hierarchy. What's the most important thing that you need to work on? What's the least, let's go to the least, what's the least important thing you need to work on in your life?

your body. Now, for you gym enthusiasts, that's an issue, but it's a reality. Why?

Well, we're not taking our bodies with us. And so, while we have to be good stewards over our body, guess what? Our bodies aren't everything. And so, it seems that God intends there to be some kind of hierarchy within the human person ordered first with the spirit, then the soul, and finally with the body.

But how that actually works out in practice, your guess is as good as mine. So, may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You've still got that in view. While you wait, don't be difficult. That's what he's saying. While you wait, be an adult Christian. Do some adulting. he who calls you is faithful.

[52 : 52] Love that. I was thinking about this yesterday. There's no way that we have time to explore that, but if you cast your minds back, I know some of you are really challenged to be able to remember last week's sermon, but if you remember all the way back to when we were looking at Matthew the second time round, we were looking at the attitudes, and we were talking about human flourishing and what God wants for us, we came up against this idea of faithfulness and faith and faithful.

It's the Greek word *pistis*. And we talked about how the best word to describe the biblical idea of faith is allegiance.

When we say I'm putting my faith in God, what we're saying is I'm putting my flag down. I'm showing the world, I'm showing myself, I'm showing the Lord, I'm going with you wherever you go.

That's faith. Does that make sense? I'm wearing your colours, whether you get relegated or not. Sorry, Sam. Interesting here, Paul says, it's not us that are faithful, it's God that is faithful.

And in the context of these verses, he's saying this, God has pledged his allegiance to you. He's pledged that he will follow through for you.

[54 : 25] He has promised that what he has promised to do, he's going to do. He's going to follow that through. That's what faith means, that's what faithful means. God has he's going to follow you.

And then he says, he who calls you is faithful and he will surely do it. God has to follow and then Paul closes the letter in verse 25.

Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss, which we do not practice, just FYI. That's called a black eye waiting to happen.

I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. And we assume by that this was a letter that was supposed to be distributed amongst the churches.

As was pretty common, they would make a copy, send it on, make another copy, send it on. And so he says these five chapters are good for all of the churches.

[55 : 33] Make sure it gets read there too. And the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Let's pray. Father, thank you for this wonderful letter. Thank you for the instructions that you have given them.

Lord, we thank you for the instructions that you've given us. Lord, we want to recognize that they are not easy by any stretch of the imagination. They are difficult things for us to do.

We have a propensity to be selfish and arrogant and be self-centered. And yet you call us to much greater things. And so how we need your spirit to empower us, to equip us, to motivate us to that end.

And we do pray, Lord, that as we, not just as we leave this place today, but as we carry on meeting as Christian people in this place, that we would be able to put these things into practice and we would have these things at the center of our mind, to be intentional about keeping the peace one to another.

Lord, we know that it's difficult. We know that it's not going to be an easy road. But we want to be able to echo what Paul has just said, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

[56 : 53] We want to be rested and rooted in that grace that you have. And so, Lord, we want to just ask, Lord, that you would continue to do that work that you promised in us, to sanctify us, to set us apart for you.

Lord, and in that setting apart, in that sanctifying, Lord, we pray that you would help us relationally, help us in our worship, help us in our discerning of spiritual things, help us in our sanctification, in our relationship of the world.

Lord, that we may be approved workers, set aside for you. Lord, we thank you, Lord, that we get to read such a letter in such a time as this.

As Paul is reminding them that you are soon coming back, Lord, we look into the news and we watch the news, we hold the Bible in one hand and watch the news in another, and Lord, we can see these things coming to fulfillment.

And Lord, while we don't necessarily believe the things in Israel and Iran are total fulfillment of your word, Lord, we see them on the horizon. And Lord, so our hearts go out, Lord, we, not our hearts not only go out to Israel, Lord, we ask that you would protect our country, your people, your land.

[58 : 22] Lord, we also pray that you would protect your people in Iran. Lord, we know that there's Christians in Iran. Lord, and so we pray that you'd protect them.

Lord, whatever your will is in that place, Lord, we just look forward to your will coming about. And Lord, we pray, Lord, that this would not be a distraction to the things that are happening in either the West Bank or in Gaza, Lord, and we pray again, Lord, that your people would be seen to be following your ways.

Lord, so important. Lord, that we want, you know, this nation of Israel that's been declared to be your people, Lord, we want them to be following your ways. And so, Lord, we pray, Lord, that you would just enable just spirit-filled, Bible-believing Christians to be influential in that place.

But again, Lord, we pray for the church in Gaza. Lord, we pray for the church in the West Bank. Lord, we pray for the church in northern Israel. Lord, and we pray, Lord, for just a greater influence there, Lord, that people would come to know you as their Lord and Savior, that they wouldn't trust in cruise missiles and drones in their 16 planes.

Lord, but their trust would be in you. Lord, that phrase even comes from their Bible, that they trust in God. Lord, may they echo the words of David, Lord, who said that very thing, our trust is in God.

[60 : 08] And so, Lord, as we look at those things, Lord, and we might be concerned about these things, Lord, we don't look so much at those things, but we look to you. Lord, and we pray, Lord, that you would help us to live right in this place at this time while we wait for you to come back.

Lord, help us to do that well. Lord, help us in our doing that well. We would be a witness and a light to this world. Lord, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.