

LSB 1 Thess. 5:12 - 15

*12 But we ask of you, brothers, that you know those who labor among you, and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. 14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.*

Well, here we are again this morning, and we didn't even finish vs 12 last week. We'll keep mining for gold right here in this rich vein.

I purposely split this up into two parts because vs 12 is distinctly about how the sheep should treat the shepherd and what the shepherds roles and responsibilities are to the sheep.

So last week I centered solely on the part about what shepherds are responsible to do for their sheep. They are to work hard. Toil to exhaustion for the sheep. They are to lead the sheep. Protect the sheep. Oversee the flock watchfully and lead them to lush food and good water. And finally the shepherds are to admonish the flock.

The responsibility is to teach the word, and we discovered that it's impossible to faithfully teach this book without the element of correction. The book is a corrective from ch 3 of Genesis to ch 22 of Revelation. A faithful shepherd who teaches the full council of God will be one who admonishes the sheep. It's just built in with teaching God's word.

So the shepherd has some tough commands here to be faithful to as one who will be accountable to the owner of the sheep. But the sheep also have some commands and responsibilities and we're going to work through Paul's admonishment of how the sheep should respond to their shepherd.

Last week I was on the spot. This week it's your turn to be in the spotlight

of God's word. Fasten your seat belts. Just kidding, this will be a fairly comfortable ride. But it may be eye opening, just the same.

*12 But we ask of you, brothers, that you **know** those who labor among you, and lead you in the Lord and admonish you,*

We are going to look at the verb "know" in Paul's opening sentence. Your version may have any one of a number of different translations. In fact it was telling to go to the parallel translations and see just how many different ideas were used in all of the different versions for this word.

*Acknowledge those who labor among you. Honor those who labor among you. Respect those who labor among you. Appreciate those who labor among you. Be thoughtful those who labor among you. And finally, simply Know those who labor among you.*

From Strong's concordance, the greek word here is *eidó*: be aware, behold, consider, perceive. It's the bridge word for when seeing becomes more than just the physical mechanical seeing of a thing. It's the understanding, the knowledge of, what is seen. The perception. Seeing with your mind. It's the idea, one of several, that there's more there than meets the eye at first glance.

I buy box lots of large format camera parts from a seller who doesn't want to deal with selling the stuff a piece at a time. And sometimes I'll open the box of stuff and start going through the pieces and there'll be something that I'm not sure about so I'll do some research and find out, that thing has more value than I originally thought. Increased knowing brings increased value. Sometimes. That can work both ways. Sometimes increased knowledge says, oops, I may not even break even. It looked sort of important . . . it isn't.

In our verse knowing is perception that understands and responds to value. What do you do with a man who gives of his time to study God's word deeply and then feeds you and protects you and leads you to safe places and

even admonishes you if you're wandering a bit.

There is value in someone who works hard for *your* good. If *your* thriving is dependent on good leaders, how do you respond to them? Another aspect might be that for some reason, good spiritual leaders who are able to teach are not so common. Rarity also increases value. Paul says think about what you have in this person who has accepted this responsibility for your well being.

The family dynamic at the most basic levels comes to mind. That's why when Paul was listing the qualities necessary for elders who would teach and lead, he tells you to look at the family dynamics in their own households. If his children and wife are thriving, that's a clue. He might have value.

Another idea born in family dynamic that carries over into pastoral leadership comes to mind. The word cherish. I discovered just a few years into my marriage that if my wife really knows that I cherish her, that she is of irreplaceable value to me, that silly woman will put up with a LOT.

That's how the congregation is to "know" their pastor. If you cherish your leaders, and you let them know from time to time, they'll do almost anything for you. It's a reciprocal dynamic.

There was a story in a church bulletin long ago that goes something like this. Trust me, I steal from the best; It was titled . . .

“How to Get Rid of a Pastor,” Listen to it.

“Not long ago a well-meaning group of laymen came from a neighboring church to see me. They wanted me to advise them on some convenient and painless method of getting rid of their pastor.

I'm afraid, however, that I wasn't much help to them. At the time, I had not had the occasion to give the matter serious thought. But since then, I have pondered the matter a great deal, and the next time anyone comes for

advice on how to get rid of the pastor, here's what I'll tell them.

- “One: look the pastor straight in the eye while he's preaching and say ‘amen’ once in a while, and he'll preach himself to death.
- Two: pat him on the back, brag on his good points, and he'll probably work himself to death.
- Three: rededicate your life to Christ and ask the preacher for some job to do, preferably some lost people you could win to Christ, and he'll die of heart failure.
- Four: get the church to unite in prayer for the preacher, and he'll soon become so effective that a larger church will take him off your hands.”

*12 But we ask of you, brothers, that you **know** those who labor among you, and lead you in the Lord and admonish you,*

We're looking at that single little verb that Paul has asked the brothers in Thessalonica to do for their leaders. eido. to know.

Sometimes the best way to understand a word is to look at it's reciprocal, it's opposite. The opposite of this word eido, to know, would be to take for granted. Neglect. I look at marriages and my heart breaks for some dear little wife who is working her heart out and her husband doesn't even know she's there. He's somewhere else. In body and mind. No interest in her. Neglect is the single most deadly killer of marriages, and preachers.

This word to know, is the opposite of neglect. It's the opposite of taking someone for granted. Make a little fuss over your leaders once in a while. Let them know that you love them for their effort and work. A little appreciation. A little recognition.

Beloved, I'm just making the sense of the words. Let me take a moment and praise you all. You all make too much fuss. You give me recognition beyond my worth. I have to tell Skip, make my name smaller on the bulletins please. Use ordinary black ink. Don't make my name big.

And you folks pay me way too much for what I do. I'm telling you what the words mean, but I'm not asking for any more than you folks give to me. I've allowed you to be generous because I believe God blesses a people who are generous with their leaders. And as we move farther into retirement and inflation eats up the value of the dollars we saved for these years, the day will come when we actually will rely on your generosity.

My friend that I mentioned last week, who was forced out of his church by his congregation told me that in 15+ years he never took a pay check. I think that may have been a mistake. Whether you actually need it or perhaps you don't, you do your congregation a disservice if they aren't obediently responding to this verse here that says, they need to acknowledge their leaders. Honoring those who labor for your well being is pleasing to God.

Finally, before we leave this command to know your leaders, one more passage comes to my mind. John, chapter 10. Sheep, again. Such useful creatures. I think God made them helpless and defenseless and stupid on purpose for this very object lesson of how reliant we are on our shepherds.

*John 10:2 But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he brings all his own out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they **know** his voice. 5 A stranger they will never follow, but will flee from him, because they do not **know** the voice of strangers.”* John 10:2 - 5

There is an element of trust and knowing through long association of thriving here. The sheep know the shepherd by voice. That's our shepherd. He's the one who leads us to green pastures and clear water. He's the one who comes looking for us, who knows our names. He's the one who keeps us safe.

That's a bit much perhaps. I'm not that shepherd, Jesus is. But I'm an

undershepherd who will answer *to* that shepherd. Some of it is transferable. I think there is a sense here of what Paul begs his hearers to do. Know who your shepherds are. Intimately know your leaders who will give an account for your souls.

That's a LOT for that single verb; eido. To know. Know your leaders. Acknowledge your leaders. Follow your leaders, in this book. Don't follow the bad stuff. We've all got some. But follow them in so much as they teach you the words of this book. Life giving words.

OK, vs. 13 in that context;

*12 But we ask of you, brothers, that you **know** those who labor among you, and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.*

Redundant? I feel like I've already preached this sermon in vs. 12. Paul thinks it's worth saying twice. Actually, Paul is giving us another angle of this diamond of the work that those who shepherd the flock are doing.

What Paul is telling the Thessalonians here is slightly different. In a way this is about status. Rank, if you will. That word regard is actually about status or rank. God ranks things differently than the fallen world does.

In the world we might rank men by several possible measures. Who is the man with the most money. Jeff Bezos? Elon Musk? Bill Gates? Mark Zuckerberg?

Or perhaps who is the most powerful person in the world? According to Forbes; #1 Xi Jinping China #2 Vladimir Putin Russia #3 Donald Trump

Or we might look to the Time Magazine Person of the year. I'm old school and searched for Man of the Year and nothing came up. Person of the year.

For 2021, Elon Musk displaced Kamala Harris and Joe Biden who were the 2020 pick's who displaced Greta Thunberg.

Satan's world. Power, Money, Popularity. But in God's authority to reign in this world, the church of the Lord Jesus, ranking is different. And Oh by the way, Pope Francis is in the wrong list. He's Time's 2013 person of the year and Forbes' 6th most powerful on two of the previous lists. But I don't find him in my Bible.

According to Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, the work I do, studying and teaching you the very revelation of God Himself to men, via His prophets and His Son, is the highest possible office attainable on earth.

So if Elon wanted to trade places with me, my answer would be immediate. Why would I do that?? Why would I take a step down? God has honored me with the highest ranking this side of heaven. A shepherd who takes care of the Master's sheep and feeds them His words. No king has a higher or more important job to do. If the call comes to be president of the USA, I'd have to say, sorry, I'm busy with something more important.

But then Paul brings us back down to earth. 13 *when we are slandered, we answer gently. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.* 1 Cor. 4:13 Ahh, that's more like it. In this world's ranking status I'm pond scum. Rubbish. Waste.

Look again at vs. 13. 13 *and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work*

The word translated regard in the greek is hégeomai (hayg-eh'-om-ahee) definition; a governor or leader who leads others. A chief. We get our word hegemony, little changed from the greek word here. Dominant.

Wow, right. I'm not making this stuff up. But in the church of Jesus, we don't bow down to leaders, we bow down to Jesus. What do we do with our leaders then? Also in verse 13. hyperekperissou (exceedingly) agapē

(love) them.

The church's response is different from the worlds. Those who lead you, and especially those who lead you well according to Hebrews 13, you don't bow before them in worship, what you do is super love those folks. Hyper agape. Super duper love for good leaders. Paul's words, not mine.

This is a little embarrassing for me. The last thing I want is any more fuss. Save that for effective leaders if you ever get one. You dear folks are hyper loving me just fine. You automatically have responded just as Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to also do.

Then at the end of vs 13 Paul says; *Live in peace with one another*. This is a bridge. We've talked at some length about the shepherds responsibilities to the sheep, and the sheep's responsibilities to their hard working shepherds, but here, and in vss 14 and 15 Paul transitions from those distinct roles to speak to how we respond to *one another*.

Beginning at the last words of vs 13, Paul transitions to responsibilities that every member of Christ's body, the church, has for every other member of the body of Christ. This isn't for leaders specifically or for followers specifically, this is for everybody equally. One another. If you fall outside of that category, you're not in the church. You're not saved.

Whoever arbitrarily added the verse numbers a few centuries back could have ended vs. 13 at the end of 13 and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work

and began vs. 14 with *Live in peace with one another*. Paul makes a natural break here in roles and responsibilities. One another is everyone for everyone. We all have this role. And Paul begins this section with peace.

*Live in peace with one another*. We are so blessed that we don't experience any tension, any infighting in our little group, our family here in this church. I'm not aware of any tension. We are so very blessed.



But the church is like any family dwelling together. We are all sinful fallen folks. Tension in the church is possible. This side of heaven, we could even say perhaps it's normative. We all do battle with our old sin natures. There are differences of opinion on gray areas.

Paul begins this section with *Live in peace with one another*.

Then Paul launches into some specifics. Everything he will say here is for everyone to minister to everyone. One another. All of us to All of us.

*14 And we urge you, **brothers**,* That's all of us. Paul didn't have the pronoun police to admonish him to be inclusive. Brothers is all genders, all ages, all inclusive of everyone in the body of Christ. One another. We all do this. Everyone's responsibility to everyone, all included in brothers.

*admonish the unruly,* All of us are responsible for each other. If someone amongst us is living in a way that brings dis-honor to Christ, it isn't just the shepherds job to admonish that person. It's all of our responsibility.

Go to your brother and try to help. Does the person just need to understand the clear teaching more clearly? Admonish is teaching the book. Sunday school teachers admonish the little ones. Women admonish other women. Men admonish other men.

Wisdom restrains children from admonishing adults. Wisdom restrains women from admonishing the men. And vice versa. Men should help men. Women should help women. Adults should lovingly admonish children being careful not to offend parents and teachers who have first responsibility. Iron sharpens iron.

Proverbs 27:17, "*Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens the face his neighbor*," is almost universally seen as positive. Some view this maxim as an example of "tough love," others as a rewording of a verse earlier in this passage, "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend*" (27:6).

In our new world of absolute personal autonomy, "*how dare you enter my space and tell me how to live or act or what to do*", mentality, the church has almost totally lost this aspect of people coming alongside in love, and helping people. We have been trained by our culture to be abhorrent of Paul's command for those of us who dwell together called out of this world and together in common in Jesus.

Admonish the unruly! If someone is living outside of the boundaries of Jesus teaching, do not respect his or her space like our culture insists, admonish them. Carefully. The word unruly suggests black and white areas not gray areas.

In the great commission we forget the part about teaching obedience;  
18 *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 **teaching them to keep all that I commanded you**; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

If you have a christian brother who is not living within the clear black and white commandments of Jesus, you have the responsibility to try to help.

The thought is almost frightening to us in this culture, but there it is. Brothers, admonish the unruly. We need to get this right. We don't want to be busybodies admonishing each other because we've waited too long to pull the weeds in our yards than some other brother thinks is the time limit, right. Don't admonish me because my truck is dirty and yours is clean. So let's look at the word, *unruly* here.

What does it mean to be unruly? The word Paul chooses here is only used in this exact form this single time in the Bible. Ataktos.

This gets very interesting. Here is the definition from Strong's;  
Ataktos (an adjective derived from 1 /A (anti, or "not") and 5021 /tAssō,

which is to "draw up, arrange") – properly, out-of-line ("without order,") (figuratively) out of God's appointed (proper) order; unruly, refusing to observe God's guidelines.

On May 17, 2014, Admiral William H. McRaven addressed the graduating class of the University of Texas at Austin on their Commencement day and his speech has become sort of famous. A best selling book resulted. His opening line, if you want to change the world . . . make your bed.

To a world of dissolute young people who have torn down every rule of decency and orderliness of civilized people someone had the guts to stand at a commencement speech and say . . . live with some discipline.

I'm old. But the current generation is sort of the maijauna generation. Disengage, check out, abandon everything, get stoned, do nothing. With your life. Just waste it being wasted.

That's taking the definition of unruly to the maximum perhaps. But later on in 2nd Thessalonians we run into what we believe Paul is referring to right here. In 2 Thess. 3, and we'll be in that passage in a few months perhaps, so this is a preview, it has this;

*6 Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who walks in an unruly manner and not according to the tradition which they received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we did not act in an unruly manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the authority, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would imitate us. 10 For even when we were with you, we used to command this to you: if anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat. 11 For we hear that some among you are walking in an unruly manner, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.*

Sounds like the admonishment in 1 thess 5 wasn't working and Paul takes it a step further and says hold those brothers at arms length.

In our culture the word for unruly suddenly takes on dimensions no one was thinking much about until recently. Think about this possibility that seemed completely crazy to christians a generation ago.

The word ataktos means to live outside of God's order. Yet the evangelical and broader more liberal church is doing just the opposite of what Paul commands the church to do in this verse.

Evangelicalism and the broader umbrella of christendom are knocking themselves out to somehow accomodate the utter abandonment of sexuality outside of Jesus clear teaching that human sexuality can only be accomodated within biblical marriage with almost no possible dissolution of one man, one woman, who become one flesh that is inseperable.

The so-called church is rampant with sexually active unmarried singles and something that is utterly impossible, homosexual christians. All of that is outside the bounds of God's stated order. Unruly. Outside of God's ordained order.

We don't seem to have a problem here because people come and listen to me preach 3 or 4 times and beat feet out of here. That's OK. Ish. I question the salvation of folks who will not endure sound doctrine. Wish it was otherwise.

In Thessalonica there wasn't the first church of something or other down the street to go to if the leaders at First Thess were rubbing you the wrong way. They didn't have those options.

Paul says, you folks lovingly work with those who are unruly. Admonish them, in love. And if they don't order themselves according to God's stated order, the commands of Jesus, we'll see in the next letter he says, you hold them at arms length. That's actually the beginning steps of the discipline

process that will remove unruly people like a surgeon cuts out cancer.

If admonishment is ultimately ineffective, you may have to begin the more serious removal and restoration process for the sake of the well being of the sheep.

And what we're witnessing these days is that in some cases, the unruly outnumber the faithful and solve the problem of admonishment by running off the faithful leaders. A hostile takeover by the unruly. Unfortunately common now. And something that should sadden but not surprise us because Paul told Timothy 2000 years ago to expect it.

*3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.* 2 Tim. 4:3,4

We're out of time this morning so we'll continue this next week if the Lord allows. We live week to week these days because we think the Lord may show up in the sky to call us home at any moment. Literally.

The rest of chapter 5 to the end of this first letter is like stacatto fire. It's as if Paul is running out of papyrus to write on and just fits everything he needs to tell us in a short area. There's still plenty more pay dirt here. It's condensed. Tightly packed. But very very rich.