

# Your Call to Urgent Business

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OK, all you people who usually come to the first service, you need to teach all the people who usually come to the second service how to be very solemn. And, all of you people who are [from] the second service, you need to teach the people [from] the first service how to laugh. It is so different—the different services. It's really strange. In the morning, I say something and I think it's kind of funny, and [there's silence.] I don't know if they need more coffee or more Krispy Kremes or what, but... it's like raising the dead.

Well, this morning we were going to finish up the sub-series [on angels and demons]. We're trying to get through Luke and then we're trying to get through our angels and demons series, and then while I was gone, [the elders] said, "You have to preach on something that relates to 'body life.'" And I [asked], "Can I have angels, demons, and body life [in a sermon]?" And, Tim says, "Uh, I don't think so." So, we're going to be looking at 1 Thessalonians 5:14–15 this morning.

It was interesting that Jeff was talking in his testimony about how the Body of Christ is [an] organism that takes care of itself. You have eyelashes and eyelids that blink when things start coming [toward your eye]. You have this natural reflex to protect yourself. There are all sorts of things that God has created in our human bodies to protect us and to heal us when things

happen. When you get the flu, your white blood cells rise, they go on the attack, they subdue the enemy, and they even build up immunities, so that if you ever get that [illness] again, they'll be able to fight it off a lot quicker.

Your body is ready to take care of scratches, and bruises, and cuts. If you get a cut, you don't have to tell yourself, "Heal!" Your body does that automatically—it just knows how to. Your blood coagulates and pretty soon it starts stitching itself up and it fixes itself. You [also] have a skeleton that is designed to protect some of your vital organs.

The Church is compared to a body in the Bible. It's called the "Body of Christ." God has incorporated a lot of self-protecting and self-healing qualities in the Body of Christ. And do you know what they are? [They are] you. You are the white blood cells, the skin, the skeleton, and all those important parts—every one of you. I'm not just talking about the elders and the paid pastors, I'm [saying] it's everyone's responsibility to *be responsible*, to take care of each other in the local church. God calls all believers to be part of the protection and maintenance of this local body of believers.

So, this morning, as we have our One Accord Sunday, we want to look at 1 Thessalonians 5:14–15. We are going to study how the local body of believers is to relate to one another so that we can be the healthiest body we can possibly be. As you look at your text, I just want to give you a little bit of background. The town of Thessalonica is located at the north end of the Aegean Sea, [which is an arm of the Mediterranean Sea located between what is now Greece and Turkey.] And Paul, on his second missionary journey, had traveled through Thessalonica, [which is] recorded in Acts 17. He went through there, preached the gospel, and a bunch of people became believers. The problem is, the Jews there didn't like Paul's evangelistic exploits, and people coming to the Lord, and people believing new things. So, they drove Paul out of town, along with his two companions, Silas and Timothy. [Paul and his companions] then went south to a place called Berea. They started preaching the gospel there, and more people came to the Lord there. But when the Jews who were mad at Paul in Thessalonica heard about his success in Berea, they came down, stirred up the Jews in Berea,

and drove Paul out of Berea, too. So then he had to leave Berea, and he got on a ship and headed to Athens. Silas and Timothy stayed behind [for] a little while to help the Berean church get underway. Later on, they caught up with [Paul] in Athens.

But, Paul was worried about the Thessalonian Church. He was worried because they were brand new believers. He had only been there a little while, he had been driven out of town, and he's wondering, "I wonder if they're doing OK. I wonder if they're ministering to each other. I wonder if there are false teachers among them." You know, all of the things that you care for with those who are your spiritual children. That is why, if you look at 1 Thessalonians 3:1–3, Paul says this:

Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.

The last thing the Thessalonians knew [was] that Paul was driven out of their town, then he was driven out of Berea, and he got on a ship and took off. They didn't know what happened to him; he didn't know what happened to them. And so, he dispatched Timothy [and] Timothy went, checked up on [the Thessalonians], encouraged [them], got the news, brought some messages from Paul to them, and then returned to Paul. Paul then left Athens and went to Corinth, where he wrote the book of 1 Thessalonians, which covers all sorts of things. If you read through the book, there are all kinds of themes in the book. You can tell that Paul [was] writing to a young church that [didn't] really have a lot of knowledge about anything, because he [talked] about a lot of different subjects.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12–15, he addresses relationships in the Church. As a matter of fact, chapters 4 and 5 are [both] devoted to the basics of

Christian living. And so, he's saying, "This is what you need to know," in verses 12–15, "about how to care for one another." He says, "This is how you are to care for your leaders first," in verses 12 and 13, and then in verses 14 and 15, which is our text for this morning, he then addresses our relationship and how we are to care for each other. And this is what he says; you can follow along as I read:

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 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. [5:14–15]

So, Paul begins verse 14 by saying, "We urge you." The word "urge" means "to beseech, exhort, entreat, encourage." It is a present active verb, which means "always be doing this." So, Paul is saying [that] there is some urgent business that all believers in the local body need to be continually doing and engaging in, and that is this whole idea of helping each other to grow in the Lord. The word "brethren" is not just talking about men here, it's used in a general sense. When he says, "We urge you, brethren" he's talking about all believers—the brethren, all believers in the Body of Christ.

So, from these two verses, Paul lays out six commands—six imperatives—in order to help you know how you are to be responsible to others within the local body or the Church. That's what we're going to look at this morning.

If you look in verse 14, the first thing [Paul] commands is: "admonish." "I urge you, brethren," or "I beseech you," or "I request of you, brethren," what? That you "admonish." Now, I don't know if you've ever done any study in biblical counseling, but if you [have], they throw out all of these jargon terms and one of them is "nouthetic counseling." If you've ever read that word, you might have wondered, "What is that 'nouthetic' thing?" It's not a word you hear pretty much anywhere, unless you take Greek or unless you take a class in biblical counseling. The word "nouthetic" comes

from the Greek word “notheteo,” and it means “to put in mind, to lay to the heart, to impart understanding to.” It’s usually translated “warn,” “admonish,” “instruct,” or “exhort.” It’s a word that implies confrontation. There’s a problem in someone’s life, you see that problem, and then you go to that person and you help instruct him to help him not have that problem anymore. That’s basically how the word is used. You can look up all the different passages where it occurs, and it’s always used in that sort of reference—somebody has something that’s wrong, or some hurt, or some sin, or something, and somebody else sees it and goes to that person and then imparts biblical knowledge and wisdom so that [person] can learn how to live correctly.

That’s what Paul is saying here, when he’s saying “admonish.” Paul had to admonish the Thessalonians in chapter 4, right before our text, in verses 11–12, because there were those who were excited about the return of Christ, they were so excited that they sold everything, gave it all away, and were sitting around. They were just chilling out, [thinking], “Jesus is coming back any day! Yeah, I don’t have a job and I’m not working, but why start up a business when Jesus is coming back?” The problem is: people like that get hungry and they start coming around with basset-hound eyes, looking for meals from the Christians who are working. And so, these people were putting undue pressure on the Church because they were being lazy. And, that’s why, in verse 14, it says, “admonish the unruly.” It really means the “idle people,” or the “undisciplined people.” The reason it is translated “unruly” in the New American Standard [version] is that when you’re idle and undisciplined you become unruly.

There is a word in the Greek that means “to put in order, to arrange in military rank or file.” [Unruly] is the negative of that word. It means to be “out of order, disorderly.” It means to be “out of step, not in line with the rest of the Church,” or “disobedient.” And there are those in every church who are lazy. Now, don’t get me wrong here. I’m not necessarily talking about physically lazy [people]. Sure, there are the couch potatoes—the people who do the least amount of work as possible, [who ask], “Could you hand

me the remote control?" We aren't talking about that. What we're talking about here is spiritually lazy [people].

Let's say there is a businessman who is killing himself to make money. He gets up before light, gets in his BMW, heads down to the recesses of inner-city LA, goes up to the top of some huge high-rise, and there labors twelve hours a day, day after day, six days a week, either making money or planning to make more money. Now, you wouldn't say that guy is lazy. The guy's a workaholic. I mean, the guy is *killing* himself to make money. And sure, his wife and his children have all the things in the world. He is providing for them with worldly stuff, but he's not a spiritual leader. He rarely, if ever, cracks [open] his Bible, he basically has no prayer life whatsoever unless there's a traffic jam, and when he prays, it's not for the glory of God. He doesn't serve in the church because he's too busy working for things that perish—for money, for position, for power. He's kind of like Ebenezer Scrooge's friend, Jacob Marley: he is forging a ponderous chain of neglect because he has not taken care of his spiritual family. He has not made *mankind* his business.

And there's the housewife: she's got two [young] children. Her husband leaves her [to go to work] as she sleeps in bed. She sleeps as long as her two young children will let her. Eventually, they wake her up and she goes through her routine—diapers, Cheerios, the paper. She looks through the ads, reads the funnies and the gossip column, and decides what she's going to watch on TV that day. It's 10:30 in the morning [and] she's still in her pajamas. She takes a shower and gets dressed as soon as the children go down for their morning nap. Then she calls some friends on the phone, watches some more TV, surfs the Web, does a little e-mail, makes lunch, cleans up, changes some diapers, puts her kids down for a second [nap]. She doesn't have time for the Lord. She's too busy! She's got two young children.

Have you ever heard of Susanna Wesley? One person writes of her:

In nineteen years, she gave birth to nineteen children, nine of whom died as infants—including two sets of twins. One baby was accidentally smothered by the maid. Another was crippled for life in a tragic accident.

Because her husband often traveled as an itinerant preacher, she was left at home to take care of her large group of children for periods of up to a year. They were poor; they had little means, but Susanna was committed to caring for her family. She set up a school in her home and put them through a rigorous education.

Twice their home was destroyed by fire, the second of which almost took the life of John, who was later to become a great preacher. She believed the primary goal of her parenting was the saving of her children's souls and admonition and instruction in the Word of God. So each day before class, she set up an hour to herself for Scripture reading and prayer, and led them all in singing psalms.

Because Susanna wanted to develop a personal relationship with each child, she scheduled a private appointment with each of them once a week for spiritual exhortation, admonishment, and encouragement in the Lord.

And, of course, she only produced a couple of great children: John and Charles Wesley.

The spiritually unruly are not those who are not busy. They are those who are not busy with the priorities that God has given them in their lives.

“I have homework to do.”

“I have sports stuff to participate in.”

“I have to watch TV.”

“I have to do e-mails.”

“I have to read my favorite book or do my favorite hobby.”

Don't get me wrong: I'm not trying to say that these things are wrong and sinful in and of themselves, but if they *ever* take the place of what God commands in His Word, they become sin. Anything that gets in the way of you obeying God—that is a sin. You cannot focus and make a priority out of what is optional to the neglect of what is mandated. And this is what's happening in the Church today.

Satan would have you waste your life on things that have no eternal significance. When your years come to an end, it may happen faster than you think [because] you [could] get in [an] accident, or contract [a] deadly disease, or have [a] stroke. It's always earlier in life than when you expected. And if, by God's grace, you're even conscious right before you pine away in your hospital bed, you will not be thinking you wished you watched more TV. You're not going to be wishing, "Oh, I wish I could surf the Net." You're not going to be thinking to yourself, "I wonder what new cars are coming out this year." You will not wish you made more money, or that you had more position, or that you had more power, or that the latest [clothing] fashions were hanging and moldering in your closet. You're not going to wish any of those things. No, you're going to cry out, "Why have I been so foolish? Why did I waste my life on things that had zero eternal significance?" That's what you're going to think. And you will know then, and it will be evidently clear now that it's too late, that you have been an unruly, idle, undisciplined Christian. And you will be ashamed. You *know* you'll be ashamed when you stand before Christ.

Let's just say some godly friend were to come in and visit you as you were pining away in your hospital bed. Some friend who is just so faithful to always serve the Lord, read his Bible, pursue righteousness and godliness. This person was just so wonderful and you knew him and he knew you. You often had talks after church on Sunday. You start thinking to yourself, "This person was godly. This person had it all together." And you ask him this question: "Why did you not say something to me? Why didn't you love me enough to admonish me to live for Christ?" What would that godly friend be able to say? "I didn't want to lose your friendship," [or] "I was fearful

you were going to get mad,” or “I was hoping that one of the pastors would do it,” or “I was trusting that God would change you by and by”... what?

God says [that] it’s [everyone’s] responsibility to admonish the unruly, the idle, the undisciplined Christians. Now, you might be thinking to yourself, “Well, Jack, listen. I don’t know if I’m qualified to be an admonisher. I’ve never taken any classes or anything in admonishing.” Turn to Romans 15. Here are the two qualifications for admonishment. [If] you have these two qualifications, you’re set to go. [In] Romans 15:14, Paul says this: “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.” Did you see that?

Here we have a good character profile of the person who is qualified to be admonishing somebody else. One: you need to be “full of goodness.” That is, you need to have the other person’s welfare in view, and God’s glory in view. You might put it this way: you need to be walking in the Spirit—you know, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” [Galatians 5:22–23]. That is the characteristic of your life. You aren’t that [way] perfectly, but that is the characteristic. You’ve learned to walk with the Lord, to be consistent in pursuing His will. And [two]: you need to be “filled with all knowledge.” And no, this doesn’t mean that you have to be omniscient. What it means is [that] you need to know what the Bible says about whatever it is that you’re going to admonish somebody about—that’s all—and how to apply that.

And what Paul is saying here is [that] he wants all of us to be on the lookout for that person who is wasting his life, and to go to that person and say, “Hey, maybe you ought to make a little less money and start obeying God.” That is the loving thing to do. “Maybe you just need to get up before your children, go to bed a little earlier, get ready, get dressed, have a quiet time, and learn how to structure your life, mom, so that you can pursue the things of God.” [Or,] “Maybe you need to do [fewer] school activities, have a little less fun, in order to do what has eternal significance.” That’s what

God calls all of us to do if we meet the two qualities: “full of goodness,” “filled with all knowledge.”

Second, look at 1 Thessalonians 5:14 again, and there’s another thing that [Paul says] we are to be doing: “encourage the fainthearted.” The word “encourage” means just that: “cheer up, comfort, console, encourage.” It means to “speak to someone in a friendly way.” “Hi, how are you doing?” Friendly—you know, smilin’ Jim. Just to be the happy camper. That’s what it’s talking about here. [You should] come up to somebody who is described here as “fainthearted.” The Greek word is literally “small souled.” You know, we might say it this way: “Oh, so-and-so is feeling ‘little’ today.” Right? Yeah, small souled. Why? Well, there are a million reasons why. You know, there are so many things in our lives—people get overwhelmed by their sinfulness, pressures at work, pressures at home, pressures at school, painful relationships, and a million other things can just tear us down. And you just feel little. You feel bummed. You feel small souled, fainthearted. And when you find someone in the Church like that, God tells you—here [in 1 Thessalonians 5:14] He commands you—to go to that person and say, “Hey, you’re looking down. What’s going on?” And you listen to them. You ask them questions. You say, “Can I pray for you?” And, sure you pray for them. Or, “You know what God’s Word says,” and you encourage them with the Scriptures.

Paul, in this book, mentions two different cases of faintheartedness—these are just examples. There were those in 4:13–18, who were fainthearted about their departed loved ones, who had gone to be with the Lord, who had died. And you know what? You can be a godly Christian, you can be that godly woman or that godly guy, and if your spouse of fifty years has departed, or your child dies, or your close friend, or a brother or a sister dies, you may be thoroughly convinced they knew the Lord and they’re with the Lord, and that heaven’s a great place, and you’re glad they’re there. But there’s still something missing, isn’t there? *You miss them. You’re hurting.* And some people had gotten in there and said, “Well, the resurrection has already taken place,” and so Paul had to correct that. But the point is

[people] were feeling fainthearted about their loved ones who had departed, and they were missing them. They were worried about them.

You know, there's really only one thing that cuts through the fog of the fainthearted person. I mean, you can try distraction, you can try worldly entertainment, you can try, "Yeah, I know how you feel," but really the psalmist in Psalm 119:50 tells us the cure. David—or whoever the psalmist of Psalm 119 was—writes, "This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your word has revived me." The best thing you can do for somebody who is fainthearted, who is down, who is feeling little, is to encourage him with the truths of God's Word, to remind him of what is true.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:9–11, we also learn that the Thessalonians were fainthearted about their salvation. Have you ever met somebody like that? Paul writes to them:

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

There are some people there in the Thessalonian church who are [saying], "I don't know. I don't know if I'm saved." Have you ever met anybody like that? Yeah! It's normal for every Christian to doubt their salvation at times, when you begin to see your sin, and you know how much of a sinner you are, and you see your hypocrisy, and you know what's right, and you don't do what's right like Paul talked about in Romans 7: "The things that I want to do I don't do and I do the very things I hate" [see 7:16–19]. When you know that is true in your life, sometimes you just want to look in the mirror and [ask], "Lord, do I know You? Am I real?" Everybody goes through that. But usually, you start saying to yourself, "Well, listen. Christ died for sinners; I'm a sinner. He died for me while I was His enemy. He died for me even though before eternity He knew all the sins I was going to

commit. I have placed my faith in Him, and yes, I am a believer—maybe not a very slick one, but I’m a saved one.” And then the promises of God begin to come to your mind like a flood: “We are overwhelmingly conquerors through Him who loved us” [see Romans 8:37]. He has “canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us; . . . He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” [Colossians 2:14]. “A righteous man falls seven times, and rises again” [Proverbs 24:16]. And pretty soon, you’re like, “Hey, I’ve got a greater Savior than my sin.” And you’re encouraged.

But, you know, there are some people in the Church who get stuck in the swamp—the “Slough of Despond” [see John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*—and they cannot get out. When you see a person like that, you don’t walk by and go, “Whew! That guy is really stuck in a mental mud hole. Too bad. I’m going to get a doughnut.” You stop, and you say, “Hey, is there something wrong?”

[And he responds,] “I just . . . I don’t know. I’m so fearful. I don’t want to go to hell, and I . . . I think I’m saved. I’ve prayed so many times, I’ve repented so many times, I’ve confessed my sins a million times. I keep telling myself that Christ died for me and I’m believing in Him. I just don’t have this assurance.”

So you just go to that person and say, “Hey. Let’s just talk. So, what kind of a person are you?” Make sure he knows he’s a sinner. “What kind of God is God? Why did Jesus come to earth? Why did He die on the cross? Why did He rise from the dead? What is the gospel? How does a person get saved?” And take him through that and say, “I can’t tell you beyond a shadow of a doubt that you’re saved, but you can know it. You can know it because God’s Word says that if you ‘believe in the Lord Jesus, . . . you will be saved [Acts 16:31]. Do you believe?”

“Yes.”

And you can give him the promises of God. You can help him understand, say, “Hey, ‘do not be unbelieving’ [John 20:27],” and encourage that

person and help him. And those are just two examples of how you might, in this body of believers, “encourage the fainthearted.”

Not only that, the third thing mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:14 is: “Help the weak.” The word “help” here means to “hold on to, or support, or pay attention to, to show an interest in someone so as to support him, to keep him from falling or failing.” And we are to do this to those who are “weak,” that is, feeble, those who are without strength. You know, people can become weak because of physical illness, [but] we’re not talking about that. Paul is talking about *spiritual* weakness. That is, the weakness that causes somebody to be susceptible to every sin that seems to come down the pike. He just keeps falling into sin. Maybe he’s young in the Lord, maybe he doesn’t have a very good knowledge of God’s Word, he lacks discipline, he lacks courage, he lacks strength and boldness to do what God wants him to do. And so, when things come and sins from his past life come—lust, and pride, and an army of other sins come—then he just caves in. He caves in. And he’s weak.

[When] you see a person like that, don’t necessarily go over there and [say], “Oh, you’re unsaved! You don’t know the Lord!” Well, that may be the case, but talk to him. Make sure he knows. Some people come here [and] they’ve never gone to a church that actually teaches the Bible. And they’re all caught up in all sorts of things—maybe they’ve gone from church to church and they’re looking for a place that’s going to show them what the Bible says and how to apply it to their lives. And they don’t know. And just because *you* know doesn’t mean that *they* should know, because they probably don’t. And so, instead of ignoring them or getting a big letter “A” and writing it on them, the best thing to do is to say, “Hey, let’s talk. So, what’s going on?” Find out about them. Help them out.

Paul speaks of some who are [weak] in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8, if you look there. He says:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to

possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

And, you know, Paul is talking about people who are falling into immorality. There are a couple of different ways you can take this passage. There's this word there—do you see that word there, where it says “each of you know how to *possess* his own vessel in sanctification and honor”? Well, that word “possess” can be translated two ways: [as] “possess,” or “acquire.” And so, Paul is either saying this: “Listen, you need to abstain from sexual immorality, and you need to get a wife and not be sleeping with somebody else's wife and defrauding your brother.” Or, if you translate it “possess,” he's saying: “Listen, you need to keep track—possess, keep in line—of your own body so that you don't sleep with somebody [else's] wife.” Either way, it pretty much gets to the same point. These people were weak. They were brand-new Christians. Paul got the gospel preached and was barely able to teach them before [he was driven] out of town. And so, he had to write this letter to let them know that this is not how Christians are to behave. [If] you find somebody like that at Calvary Bible Church, you don't spurn him, you don't [treat him like] he's got the spiritual plague. You help him out. You help him out. And if somebody says, “Well, Jack, listen. I don't know how to help anybody overcome sin. You know, I've never taken any nouthetic counseling training. I can't do that!”

Well, today is your providential day. I'm going to give you the Jack Hughes two-minute crash course in biblical counseling. Here it is: six steps to helping somebody with any sin. This is what we're going to do. I'll be the counselor, you'll be the patient.

Think of any sin you ever struggled with. Here's the solution. [First:] Are you saved? Are you saved? You always have to start here, because if a person isn't saved, then their problem isn't their little sin problem, their problem is hell. And so, tell me, what is the difference between saving faith and demon faith. Tell me. Convince me that you are saved. What is the gospel? Why did Christ die? What did Christ accomplish? How do you receive that? And if you can convince me that you're saved beyond a reasonable doubt, then OK, we move on to the next step. Let's just say you seem to be a believer.

Second: Are you in the Word of God? Are you reading your Bible? Are you studying your Bible? Are you memorizing Scriptures that relate to your particular area of weakness? Right now, could you quote me any Scriptures that relate to your particular area of weakness? Is the Word of Christ richly dwelling within you? You know what the Scriptures say: 'Thy Word have I hid in my heart so that I might' what? 'not sin against you' [see Psalm 119:11]. Well, are you doing that? If you aren't, counsel, read your Bible. If you don't know how to do that, I'll show you how to have quiet times or whatever.

Third: Are you faithful to pray and ask God for help? You know, there's really only one person who can change your life. You can go to a psychiatrist and they can give you drugs that will change your behavior, but they can't change your life. Only *God* can change your life. His Word is powerful, and living, and active to change you actually into a *different person* than you ever were before. And so, I ask you, "Are you asking God for help and are you asking other people to ask God for help?"

Fourth: Do you have a plan? Do you have a plan? The proverb says: "The prudent sees evil coming and hides himself from it, but the naïve proceed and pay the penalty" [Proverbs 27:12]. Let me ask you: "Do you have a plan? Do you have a plan to avoid temptation and sin in the area of your weakness?" And if you're thinking, "Well, no," get a plan! Get a plan. Listen, if your sin is Krispy Kremes, you don't wander out there and mill around next to the doughnut table. And, you know, if I was doing you

a favor, and I saw you waiting for the “Hot [Now]” sign to turn on, I’d say, “Hey. Don’t you think you ought to be somewhere else?”

“Uh, yeah.” See? That’s admonishment. Whatever your sin is—and you know what it is, and you know the circumstances that often cause you to fall into that sin—then you make yourself a plan according to the Scriptures to deal with that particular sin. “Listen, this is my weakness, this is what the Scriptures say, and this is what I’m going to do.”

Fifth: Have you learned to confess your sins quickly when you sin? There are two kinds of people: basketballs and beanbags. Now, if you have learned this important lesson: when you sin, the first thing you need to do is confess your sin to God, [you’re a] basketball person—[you] hit the ground, recoil with confession, turn from sin, and pursue the Lord again. That is *so* important, because if you don’t do that, then what’ll happen is you become the beanbag. The beanbag strikes the ground and just stays there for a while. And as long as you’re living in unconfessed sin, the Scriptures say God doesn’t hear your prayer [see John 9:31], you’re not walking in the Spirit, you’ve cut off all of the spiritual resources for God’s blessing in your life. So, God says, “What I want you to do is confess quickly”—basketball approach, not beanbag.

Sixth: Seek counsel until you’ve overcome your sin. Listen, if you were in a walled city in Old Testament times and some army was attacking that city and they were starting to make a breach in the wall, what would you do? Run away from the breach? No. You’d take all of your armaments to that place in the wall so that you [could] stop the enemy from coming in. This is what needs to happen when there’s some area [of sin] in your life. You don’t treat it lightly. I mean, Jesus said, “Cut off your hand and gouge out your eyes” [see Matthew 5:29–30] to emphasize [this] point. Do whatever it takes, go to any extreme, to get that sin beat back and under control. So, you go to somebody—and it doesn’t need to be a pastor, it doesn’t need to be an elder. Any mature believer in the Lord who has victory over the area you don’t have victory [over] can help you in this way.

So, that's it. You're all graduates of Jack Hughes' two-minute crash course on biblical counseling. You have no excuse anymore. I graduate you. Now it's your job to get out there and help the weak.

[The fourth imperative Paul gives us in 1 Thessalonians 5:14–15 is:] “Be patient with everyone.” That's the next thing mentioned in the text. The word “patient” means just that, it means “to bear up for a long time, to have long patience, to patiently endure.” And this is one of the necessary qualities in love, for anybody who's ever memorized that section in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8. I should have all the young marrieds that I've married in this church in the last six years quote it right now, because I make them memorize it all. But, everybody knows that the first quality is: Love is what? Patient. There we go. And that is the quality of love, and the fruit of the Spirit is: “love, joy, peace, patience. . .” [Galatians 5:22]. Yeah. That's what it means to be a Christian: to be patient.

Why would [Paul] put this in there? Well, if you've ever tried to help somebody who's unruly, fainthearted, or weak, you [know you] need patience. Sometimes you just want to do the one-session therapy: [Slap.] “Snap out of it!” You get [to the point where you're] like, “Come on! Pull out of it! Get your act together.” You know, they're just not getting it. And you know what? They're probably just not getting it like you're just not getting it in another area of your life. You know, if somebody breaks their leg, you don't just say, “Be healed!” and they're done. It takes six [or] eight weeks to get over it. Well, sometimes, you may encounter that person in the foyer, and you're just checking up on him, and the next thing you know, you're in a two-year counseling situation, where you're meeting with him every couple of weeks, you're talking with him, you're reminding him of what's true, you're helping him with his life.

That's how the Body of Christ is supposed to function. That's how the Church is supposed to function. Sometimes it just takes a few words, other times it may take a *long time*. You just have to realize [that] people usually don't grow in the Lord as fast as you wish they would. God sanctifies them at His own rate. Just like you don't grow at the rate in the Lord that you

wish you could, well, there you go. Just remember that. That's why you need patience. Be patient. And who are we to be patient with? Only with "all," "every," and "each."

Fifth: Don't seek revenge. Paul says, "See that no one repays another with evil for evil" [1 Thessalonians 5:15]. This is revenge. Now, you pour your life, your time, your energy, your resources into somebody and then he attacks you. He slanders you. He gets mad at you. He says you're unloving and then he leaves the church. And, you know, there's a natural response to that: "You ungrateful. . . I sacrificed so much for you! I've given so much for you and now look what you've done!" And you start thinking, "How can I get that person back?" And God says, "No, no. Don't even go there. That may be your first inclination, but don't go there. 'See that'—see to it that, make *sure* that—'no one repays another with evil for evil.'"

Whenever I'm helping train someone for full-time ministry, I always teach them something that everybody needs to learn when they're in the ministry. And that's this: the people you end up putting the most time into, the most effort into, often get mad at the end and leave the church because you're "unloving." I've had it happen tons of times. I just say [to the person I'm training], "You know, just get ready. You're serving the Lord here. It's not your job to sanctify them. It's not your job to save them. It's not your job to apply the Scriptures for them. They have to do that. But I just want you to know there's often the case [that] people have these problems, you're working, working, working, working, and finally they feel the pressure coming on and they just don't want to obey God, and then they get mad at you because "You're unloving, you're a legalist. I'm leaving!" It's OK. It's OK—you're not responsible for that. You're responsible to love them by attempting to help them. You're not responsible for the results.

So, I just want you to know, if you're admonishing, or encouraging, or helping, or being patient, and you don't get results, remember: Results have nothing to do with you. Results are God's business. Your job is to offer help. Their job is to obey. God's job is to sanctify them, change them. And whatever you do when they turn on you and bite you, don't seek revenge.

Proverbs 26:4 says, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Or you will also be like him.” You see, if people hurt you and then you want to hurt them back, you become the very thing you despise in them. Why would you do that? “I don’t like it because you slandered me; I’m going to slander you back.” What’s *that*? “I hate it when you slander me, so I’m going to become a slanderer.” See, that doesn’t work. God says, “Don’t do it or you’ll be like them.”

Turn over to Romans 12. (I probably need to stop pretty soon. This is the first time for One Accord Sunday [and] I don’t know when I’m supposed to stop. I think I remember Edward saying one o’clock.) Look at Romans 12:17–21:

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Turn over to 1 Peter 3:8–12. The theme of the book of 1 Peter is suffering, so he’s got a lot of people who are suffering, and a lot of people who are being mean to them: the government, the Jews. People are persecuting Christians, people are being burned at the stake. You know, when somebody burns your child at the stake, you can be angry about that. That can make you want to get back [at them] and have a *jihad*<sup>1</sup>. And so, 1 Peter 3:8–12 says this:

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/jihad>

or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

[It] literally [means the Lord] "is set in battle array against" those who do evil. So, when you're helping somebody, get ready to be bitten, slandered, rejected, accused. And don't seek revenge.

Sixth and finally, [Paul] says, "Do good to others." The sixth and final [imperative is]: "Seek after that which is good for one another and for all people." There are two classes of people here: first, other believers; second, "all people." That is, those inside the Church and those outside the Church. Paul, in Galatians 6:10 has a verse that has these same two categories, where he says, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." So there is a priority. If you have to choose between helping unbelievers and believers, you help the believers. But, God wants you to be helping unbelievers *and* believers—to do good to them. That is, to do what is best for them.

You know, there are quite a few diseases of the body that hinder the body from helping itself. You know, immune system diseases, and nervous system diseases. People who contract these suffer to one degree or another. Why? Because their bodies aren't working right. Well, you know what? There is a disease that infects every church—it's called sin, and we're all born with it. We all come into the world as carriers of sin.

And, if this church is going to be the kind of church that God wants it to be, we all have to be involved in admonishing one another, encourag-

ing one another, helping one another, being patient with one another, not seeking revenge, but doing good as the continual and perpetual habit of our lives. You know, every week, people show up on Sunday morning with different symptoms of this disease—some are unruly, some are fainthearted, some are weak. And I'm telling you, you have the two-minute crash course, you're graduates, you can help them. You can help them. Every time you show up to church, imagine that you're entering into the emergency room, the trauma ward, the sick bay, and get ready, because people here have problems. If you could ever find a church that didn't have problems, it wouldn't be on this earth.

So, this is what God says to all of us: "Admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 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." Let's make it one of our life goals to come to church to help other people, because that's what's going to strengthen this body. Let's pray.

Father, we are so thankful for this text. What a great section it is to encourage us with these six commands. Father, I know that all of us will fail to obey these commands perfectly, but I just pray we would get our eyes off ourselves, our comfort, and what we want and would start thinking of others as more important than ourselves. That, Father, we might serve one another, love each other so that people would know that we are Your disciples. Father, we also pray that You would give us wisdom as to our own salvation and the state of our souls, so that if we don't know you, we would right now in our hearts come to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, receive Him as our Savior, turn our whole lives over to Him, so that whether "we eat or drink or whatever we do we'll give all to Your glory" [see 1 Corinthians 10:31]. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.