How the Church Becomes All It Can Be September 1, 2019

*1 Thessalonians 5:12-24 Series: Living Life in Light of the End*

People in the church are like porcupines in a snowstorm. We need each other to keep warm, but we prick each other if we get too close. – Ben Patterson

Intro: Fellowship may be the Achilles heel of the Canadian church.

1. Make it painless for leaders to lead. (vv. 12-13)
2. Respect is more about cooperation than accolades.

v. 12 *We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord …*

v. 13 *esteem them very highly in love because of their work*

Hebrews 13:17 *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

1. Respect starts with listening.

v. 12 *respect those who … admonish you*

Bill Gates: You have to be constantly receptive to bad news, and then you have to act on it. Sometimes I think my most important job as CEO is to listen for bad news.

Paul Cedar: My most painful experiences have been when I've had a problem and no one loved me enough to tell me about it.

* Why do you think so many Christians avoid church fellowship?
* What are some of the frustrations you’ve had in trying to lead?
* What makes you feel respected as a leader?
* How receptive are you to bad news and “admonishment?”

1. Make it easy for others to follow. (vv. 14-15)
2. We’re responsible for each other.

v. 14 *we urge you, brothers, admonish … encourage … help*

v. 15 *always seek to do good to one another*

1. Everyone has different needs.

v. 14 *admonish the idle*

2 Thessalonians 3:11 *For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.*

v. 14 *encourage the fainthearted*

v. 14 *help the weak*

1. Everyone has the same need.

v. 14 *be patient with them all*

Romans 15:1 *We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

* How conscious are you of the fact that God wants you to take responsibility for the people you fellowship with?
* What are some ways that people can do more harm than good when they try to admonish, encourage and help others?
* How do you wish people would admonish you?
* Why is it so important to be patient with everyone in the church?

1. Never stop leaning on Jesus. (vv. 16-24)
2. We need more of Jesus in our midst.

v. 16 *Rejoice always …*

v. 17 *pray without ceasing*

v. 18 *give thanks in all circumstances*

H. W. Westermeyer: The pilgrims made seven times more graves than huts…nevertheless, [they] set aside a day of thanksgiving.

1. We need more of the Holy Spirit among us.

v. 19 *Do not quench the Spirit.*

v. 20 *Do not despise prophecies …*

v. 21 *but test everything*

1. Only God can ultimately change us.

v. 23 *may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely*

v. 23 *may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*

v. 24 *He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*

* How do you actually rejoice “always” and give thanks “in all circumstances?” Shouldn’t you just rejoice and give thanks when things go well?
* To quench means to extinguish, like when you put out the fire. How can you quench the Spirit?
* What is it that God promises to be faithful to do in v. 24?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study 2 Kings 21:19-22:2.

Notes