

## 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 Shepherding the Flock

1

### **Introduction**

The world is a difficult place to live. It is filled with evil at every turn, and yet we are commanded to remain “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). How does one do this?

God has instituted a couple of institutions to help us, and both are under direct attack from the forces of evil.

Today’s text is primarily talking to the church and those in leadership. However, churches are made up of families. The church and its leaders are to help build up families, because families make an impact upon the church.

2

## **Introduction**

To have strong churches, we need families dedicated in their pursuit of Jesus Christ and living a life of obedience.

Remember that the church is not a building but a body of believers. In this sense, homes become micro-churches. Parents are to shepherd their children just as Church leaders are to shepherd the larger flock of the church.

So that I am not misunderstood, God has appointed fathers to be the spiritual leaders in their homes, yet mom becomes the “helper/completer” who deals with so much of the day to day raising and training of children.

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## **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, <sup>13</sup> and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

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## The Shepherd's Responsibility

1 Thessalonians 5:12

**And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.**

Leadership is important to the church and the home. Paul outlined the qualifications and duties of church leaders (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). Four basic New Testament terms identify and describe church leaders.

First is the familiar term **elder** (*presbuteros*), which characterizes leaders as spiritually mature and wise (Acts 15:2ff.; 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1, 5; 2 John 1; 3 John 1).

Second is the word **overseer** (*episkopos*; Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1–2; Titus 1:7), which describes the leader's spiritual oversight and authority.

Third, the familiar term **pastor** (*poimēn*) emphasizes the leader's responsibility to feed and protect his flock (Eph. 4:11; cf. Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34).

Finally, the term **ruler** (*hegemōn*) indicates that the church leader must be able to provide spiritual discernment and guidance for his flock (cf. Heb. 13:7, 17, 24).

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## The Shepherd's Responsibility

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**And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.**

As Paul founded various churches on his missionary journeys, it was important to establish leadership. This was difficult as the churches were young. The members were new to the faith and had much to learn, but so did the leaders. In some churches there were those who thought that they should have been the one's in leadership. Like today, these people were not interested in the sheep but in the power and recognition that came from being in leadership. Paul would have spent time in prayer and under the direction of the Holy Spirit as he chose leaders.

In light of potential conflict, Paul begins this section with **we urge you** it is a gentle admonition to pay attention to the leadership. In the same way, we would urge children to recognize and listen to their parents.

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## The Shepherd's Responsibility – To Labor

1 Thessalonians 5:12

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

Paul gives three responsibilities of shepherds.

The Greek term "labor" means to exhibit great effort and exertion, to the point of sweat and exhaustion. The faithful leader works hard among his people and ministers to them as a shepherd cares for his sheep, or a father and mother lead their family. Spiritual shepherds must proclaim the gospel (2 Tim. 4:5), explain and apply the truth (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9), warn and admonish the sheep (cf. Rom. 15:14; Col. 1:28; 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:14), and counsel them from Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16–4:4; cf. Prov. 17:17; 27:6, 9, 17).

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## The Shepherd's Responsibility – To Labor

1 Thessalonians 5:12

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

I know that mothers work hard. They take houses and rework them into homes. They decorate and add those special touches. They labor hard making sure that the needs of their families are met. I cannot help but think of Proverbs 31. In that passage it speaks of the faithful woman bringing her goods from afar. I know that my wife "sails" her minivan to Walmart, Produce Junction, Shoprite, Kohls, and Home Goods to see that our needs are taken care of. Moms and wives work hard and can be easily taken for granted. Let's make sure that we give proper thanks today!

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## The Shepherd's Responsibility – Authority

1 Thessalonians 5:12

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

And are over you literally means “to stand before” and conveys the notion of authoritatively presiding, leading, or directing. Paul later used the word four times as he instructed Timothy about the character and duties of church elders (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12; 5:17). Pastors stand in the place of the Chief Shepherd as His delegated undershepherds exercising oversight and authority in His name (1 Peter 5:1–4). Leaders are responsible to give their flock spiritual guidance and direction.

The phrase in the Lord emphasizes that true shepherds are equipped and appointed by God (1 Cor. 4:1; 2 Cor. 3:5–6; Heb. 5:4), it is their duty to lead the sheep for Christ's sake, and never because they want power, prestige, wealth, or an advancement to their own careers (1 Peter 5:2–3; cf. 1 Tim. 6:9–10).

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## The Shepherd's Responsibility – Authority

1 Thessalonians 5:12

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

When God gives a child to a couple, He is appointing them to raise that child according to His precepts. The authority that is used is not for self-glory, but for the wellbeing and future profitability of the child.

Mom's also exercise Dad's authority in his absence. This is why it is important that parents present a united front in public and keep disagreements to when they are in private.

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## The Shepherd's Responsibility – Instruction

1 Thessalonians 5:12

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

Leaders are to admonish you. The Greek word is *noutheteō* and a word used for Biblical Counseling.

It speaks of giving Biblical instruction for the purpose of correcting and changing people. It is teaching with an element of warning, designed to direct the sheep to holy living (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14).

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## The Shepherd's Responsibility – Instruction

1 Thessalonians 5:12

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

Though it is not one of the pleasant sides of parenting, parents are called to discipline children.

This is not to be judicial punishment but acts that bring children face to face with their sin and God's grace. The goal and purpose is to see our children repent and draw closer to God.

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## The Sheep's Responsibility – Appreciate

1 Thessalonians 5:12

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

To recognize come from a word that can be translated “appreciate.” The literal meaning is “to know by experience.” Members of a church should appreciate the leaders who serve in the church. It originates from working with leadership. Leaders lead and it is important for others to follow. The church is to work together, and people are to get to know their leaders by experience. Understanding what leaders go through allows people to appreciate them.

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## The Sheep's Responsibility – Appreciate

1 Thessalonians 5:12

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

Those of us who have experienced the joys and trials of parenthood should have a new appreciation for our parents. It is amazing how smart my parents were looking back on our shared experiences. Often, we take our Mom's for granted. I like this day which gives us a gentle reminder to let our Mom's know how very much we appreciate them.

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## The Sheep's Responsibility – Esteem

1 Thessalonians 5:13

and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

The congregation of believers has the duty to **esteem** its leaders **very highly** ("**beyond all measure**"). Similar to showing appreciation, **esteem** indicates something more than simply knowing in a respectful way. This phrase calls for limitless respect for church leaders.

Paul intensified this responsibility even further by telling the Thessalonians they must have high esteem for their shepherds **in love**, not because of their personalities or the favors they rendered, but **because of their work**. So beyond appreciating the man because they know him, the saints are to hold him in even greater regard because of his divinely designed and energized calling. **Love** is the word *agapē* and refers to selfless, sacrificial service for others. The **work** the shepherds do is their ministry of the Word, which feeds the souls of the flock.

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## The Sheep's Responsibility – Esteem

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and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

We should esteem our parents for the work that they have done in our lives. Parenting is hard work. It is a 24/7 commitment with no real days off. They rejoice with us in the good, mourn with us in the bad, and comforted us in those late nights when we were sick. Moms pour themselves into their children out of love and children are to esteem them highly in reciprocal love.

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## The Sheep's Responsibility – Submit

1 Thessalonians 5:13

and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

The concept of believers living in peace among yourselves is a familiar New Testament exhortation. Here Paul's admonition specifically referred to the relationship between the Thessalonians and their leaders. For that relationship to be peaceful, the flock at Thessalonica needed to submit to its leaders. Such submission, if done in a God-honoring way, would eliminate conflict, strife, and discord and promote peace, harmony, and effective ministry within the church (cf. Rom. 12:18; 1 Cor. 14:33; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 3:10–11). Good leaders desire God's best for the flock!

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## So What ...

1 Thessalonians 5:13

and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Mom's also need to be obeyed in the home if peace and harmony are to exist.

Let's take this day to show Mom's (and all our ladies) how special they are. But we should not make it just a one day event. We should respect and honor all our leaders wherever they are. We should support our church leaders and the church should support our parents. We are all in this together!

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