

# Expectations of Harmony

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Preacher: Dave Nannery

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, I've had quite a number of friends who've worked hard to adopt children into their families, whether children, domestic adoptions, overseas adoptions, and for most of them, the adoption was a long and arduous process, but the hardest work began after the adoption took place.

That's because adoption doesn't mean that a child is just placed into a new family and now everything's good. All the problems are solved. Adoption means that we learn to live according to our new family's way of life.

And it can often take years to undo the habits that orphans have developed. It can take years to unlearn these coping mechanisms, patterns of self-reliance.

Behaviors of self-preservation, self-destruction. We have to unlearn what we have learned. And this morning we've been privileged to witness Christina and to witness Aidan being baptized into God's family, into the church.

It is an exciting moment in their lives to publicly identify themselves as the adopted children of God, as citizens of God's kingdom. So now what? Now what?

[ 1 : 19 ] What does our life together in God's family look like once we've been welcomed as his children? Well, over the last few months, we have been learning our new way of life in God's family as we study the book of 1 Thessalonians in the Bible.

Now when I call it a book, 1 Thessalonians is really actually a letter. It's a 2,000-year-old letter written to a small group of new Christians in the Macedonian city of Thessalonica.

So this new church, it was founded by the Apostle Paul, who had been commissioned by Jesus Christ to bring his good news, his gospel, from the Jewish nation to the Gentile cities around the Roman Empire.

And so what we've been learning from this letter, what we've been learning from 1 Thessalonians is that Christians have been welcomed into a family with great expectations. God's family has great expectations that Jesus Christ is going to return someday to bring judgment and justice to the world.

That he's going to save us. He's going to resurrect us, raise us back to life, give us new bodies to live with him forever and ever. That is our hope, that is our confidence, and that is what we long for.

[ 2 : 34 ] These are our great expectations. And so Paul tells you and Paul tells me how these great expectations influence the way that you and I live in God's family if we are Christians, if we have faith in Jesus Christ.

So now Paul is going to continue by reminding the Thessalonians of this way of life in his family. In God's family, we live, we act to please God, our Father.

We imitate God. We imitate the way that good children imitate their good Father. And so just as God is holy, just as God is set apart from corruption, so Christians too are meant to strive to be holy like him.

And so in chapters 4 and 5 of 1 Thessalonians, Paul's been explaining that this holiness takes the form of sexual restraint and self-control. It takes the form of hardworking love.

It takes the form of reminding each other that we have great expectations of Jesus Christ's return. And so he's going to continue reminding the Thessalonians, and he's going to continue reminding you and me, that as members of God's family, we are expected to live in harmony.

[ 3 : 47 ] Our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family. Our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family. So here is what Paul writes in chapter 5, verses 12 through 15.

If you're using one of the blue Bibles that our ushers have provided, that will be on page 988. Page 988, that's where you'll find 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 12 through 15.

I'm going to go ahead and read this from the English Standard Version. Please follow along, either on your paper copy of Scripture or on your smartphone. Follow along as I read 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 12 through 15.

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

[ 4 : 54 ] See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. This is the word of the Lord.

Now, if we're going to understand the word of the Lord, it's helpful to break this down. We're going to break this down into three forms of harmony in God's family. Three forms of harmony in God's family. So first of all, this is the first form of harmony.

Our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family as we appreciate our leaders. Our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family as we appreciate our leaders.

Now, I know that's just a tad bit suspicious that one of your leaders is getting up here and is saying, hey, appreciate us. You know, you guys owe it to me to appreciate me.

Hey, that's, it's actually kind of awkward for me to get up here and say that. Honestly, if it were my choice, I wouldn't be preaching this. But we've, the wonderful thing about preaching through scripture like this is we can't just leave off the parts that make us uncomfortable.

[ 5 : 58 ] We can't just leave off the parts that make us feel awkward. We have to preach all of what God has written in his word. And so what Paul is emphasizing in verses 12 and 13 is this, that we're to appreciate our leaders.

So it's very important to God. It's very important to God that as brothers and sisters in his family, he uses the word brothers in verse 12. As brothers and sisters in his family, we appreciate our leaders.

And so, if you're wondering, how do I go about doing that? Well, Paul gives us three ways to appreciate our leaders. So the first is in verse 12. And here's what Paul writes. So the idea here is that we recognize those who have been appointed to positions of leadership in the church.

Especially those individuals, those men appointed as elders. Sometimes they're also called in the New Testament pastors or overseers. So if you're wondering, who are the elders?

Who are the pastors of Squamish Baptist Church? That would be Jonathan, myself, Carl Neufeld, and Doug Lye. And hopefully more in the coming months and years.

[ 7 : 15 ] The idea here is that we are to recognize them and respect them as leaders. And respect not only them, but others in addition who have been given leadership positions in our church.

We do it first, Paul says, because they labor among you. In other words, they work hard. They work hard day and night to encourage you, to instruct you, to counsel you, to correct you, to help you.

I know there's a common joke that I've heard a lot of times, right? Pastors only work one day a week. Pastors only work one day a week. Some of you are already laughing, right? You know it's a joke.

Unfortunately, I've run into people who don't know it's a joke. That's a very interesting conversation there. Being an elder, being a pastor, it really is a 24-7 responsibility.

You're always on the clock. The devil doesn't restrict himself to a 40-hour work week, and neither do your elders. Being an elder, it isn't a physically demanding position.

[ 8 : 15 ] Some of you have physically demanding jobs. I've had jobs like that in the past, and I know what that's like. That's hard. But being an elder is demanding mentally, and it is demanding spiritually.

It's difficult work. And Paul also says in verse 12, the second reason for this recognition and respect is that your leaders are over you in the Lord. They are over you.

They have been given oversight of us, and they've been given that oversight. It wasn't just something that they just came up with, and they didn't seize control. They've been given oversight by Jesus Christ. So those who are over you in the Lord, they are not only to lead, and they lead the way that Jesus Christ leads, by the way.

They lead with caring servant hearts. That's the way that they are meant to lead. But they are held responsible for you, for your spiritual condition, and for mine.

They are held responsible for how they oversee you. In Hebrews chapter 13, it's written, When they stand before Jesus Christ, they will have to give an account for you.

[ 9 : 31 ] Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. I just love that last phrase. Just in case you're the most selfish possible person in the world, it's no advantage to you if your leaders are just stressed out by leading you.

To respect and to recognize your leaders in the Lord is to ask yourself this question. Is the way I speak, are the decisions that I make, are they bringing joy to my leaders?

Or is it bringing them frustration, stress, and sadness? A third reason that we are to recognize and respect our leaders in verse 12.

They admonish you. Now, there's something about our culture that we really, I've just noticed that we just, and I include myself in this, by the way, we can't bear the idea that we might be wrong.

[ 10 : 30 ] We can't bear the possibility that we might be thinking wrong, that we might be speaking wrong, we might be acting wrong. To be corrected is to be devastated. Here's the reality, though.

Despite what we think, the reality is that to be admonished or to be corrected by your leaders is to be loved. It's to be loved. In Proverbs chapter 3, it's written, And so for these reasons, we are to recognize and to respect our leaders because they labor over, they labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

And then Paul gives a second way to appreciate our leaders in verse 13. He says, In other words, they love you.

They love you. They love you. They love you. They love you by working hard for you, by taking responsibility for you, by correcting you, as difficult as that is. And so we are to respond to our leaders by esteeming them, by thinking highly of them, by loving them back.

Our esteem. Our esteem. Our esteem. It isn't given to our leaders because they're unusually talented or because they're great speakers. Or because being leaders that somehow makes them more valuable than other people in the church.

[ 11 : 59 ] This isn't a position of prestige. Their position as leaders doesn't make them more valuable. Instead, it's their work. That's what Paul says. Their work as leaders is why they need that esteem.

Because it is their work as leaders that makes them more prone to weariness, to discouragement, to despair, to spiritual attack. And so we are told we need to esteem them very highly in love.

To esteem and to love your leaders in the Lord, it's to ask yourself this question. Do I love my church leaders? And do my church leaders know that I love them?

And then Paul gives a third and final way to appreciate our leaders in verse 13. He says, Be at peace among yourselves. Be at peace among yourselves.

You know, there's a tendency in many relationships in our life. Whether it's relationships at work. Whether it's relationships in our family. We have a tendency to just get along. To settle for tolerating one another.

[ 13 : 12 ] Right? Because it is a lot easier. It's a lot easier to sweep our grievances under the rug. Just pretend like they're not there. Instead of resolving conflict.

Admitting what we've done wrong. Asking for forgiveness. But the presence of peace is so much more than the absence of conflict.

The presence of peace is embracing humility. It is making the effort to reconcile with one another. One of the best ways to appreciate your leaders in the church is to pursue peace among ourselves. In fact, I would even say, if there is just something that you've got against a brother or sister here in our church. Or you've sent something that they've got against you. And you're just not sure what to do about it.

Your elders, your pastors. They, we want you to come talk with us. So that we can help you sort through those things. Because it is our joy. To see the church at peace.

[ 14 : 15 ] To see people at peace in harmony with one another. To be at peace is to ask yourself this question. Is there anyone sitting here that I feel uncomfortable toward?

Or that I don't get along with? Or they rub me the wrong way? And what have I done? What steps have I taken to be at peace with them?

Our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family as we appreciate our leaders. We appreciate our leaders by recognizing and respecting them.

By esteeming and loving them. And by pursuing peace with one another. So that appreciation of our leaders, that is the first form of harmony in God's family. Let's move on to the second form.

That second form of harmony in God's family is found in verse 14. Our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family as we care for our fellow believers. Our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family as we care for our fellow believers.

[15:20] Paul writes this in verse 14. We urge you, brothers, admonish the idle. Encourage the faint-hearted. Help the weak.

Be patient with them all. And notice who Paul is directing that commandment towards. Sometimes we want to say, yeah, that's something that our elders and our pastors should be doing. Great, they need to get on that.

That's not who Paul is talking to. He's directing this to the brothers. To our brothers and sisters, every man and woman in God's family.

That's every man and woman in Squamish Baptist Church. Here are the four ways that Paul says we are to care for our fellow believers. In verse 14. First, we admonish the idle.

We admonish the idle. And so we've read, a few weeks ago we read in chapter 4 verses 9 through 12, that these idle people, we learned what they were like.

[16:16] They were able to work for a living. They were people who were perfectly sound in body and mind, able to work. But they were choosing not to. Instead, what they were doing is they were sponging off of wealthy patrons.

Wealthy Roman patrons. And they were amusing themselves by, you know, because they didn't really have Netflix or anything like that. And so what they would do to keep themselves amused was they would just go around spreading gossip and stirring up trouble in the community.

Just becoming busy bodies instead of being busy at work. And so Paul says that the problem with these individuals is that they won't obey God. They know what they're supposed to do and they're not doing it.

They need to be confronted and they need to be corrected over their behavior. So let's ask ourselves this. Is there anyone in our church family that I ought to gently but firmly correct for their idle or unruly behavior?

Gently but firmly correct for idle or unruly behavior. We are responsible to do that for one another. To watch out for each other. The second way that we care for our fellow believers in verse 14.

[17:28] Is that we encourage the faint hearted. The faint hearted. These are individuals who are worn out. Beat up.

Discouraged. Depressed. They want to obey God. But their problem is they can't do it. They can't obey. They don't have the power. They don't have the strength.

They've run out of gas. And so Paul says that we respond to them not by getting in their face and confronting them and correcting them and being stern with them.

Instead what we do is we encourage them. We come alongside them. We remind them. Hey you have great expectations. You have hope.

In Jesus Christ. So let's ask ourselves. Is there anyone in our church family that I ought to encourage in their weariness and despair?

[18:27] The third way that we care for our fellow believers in verse 14. We help the weak. So maybe this is a sister of ours who is physically handicapped.

A brother who's suffering pain. Someone who's struggling with doubts about our faith. Someone with a weak conscience who just tends to feel guilty about behaviors that God has said are perfectly okay.

These brothers, these sisters, they're weak in many different ways and they need us to provide for them. Whether it's their financial needs. Whether it's to assist them with doctor's appointments and child care.

Just to sit there and to listen to their doubts and fears. To remind them of the great expectations that we have in Jesus Christ. First, let's ask ourselves.

Is there anyone in our church family that I ought to help in their weakness? And then Paul ends it with a fourth and final way that we care for our fellow believers in verse 14.

[19:27] We remain patient with them all. If you've been in any of the work of the first three, you know how important that fourth one is. You have to remain patient with them all.

Because doing that hard work of ministry requires patience and it requires persistence. You know, I sometimes see, sometimes we have this attitude that, you know, so and so has a problem in our church.

What they need is to have a Bible verse quoted at them and the problem will be solved. If you've ever tried that, it does not work. Not usually. I mean, sometimes it does. Sometimes the Holy Spirit does take that and does powerful things with just a single verse of scripture.

I find the vast majority of the time, though, they don't just need a single verse of scripture. They need continual follow-up, continued instruction in scripture, continued reminders, continued reassurance, continued love.

That's what it looks like to counsel one another. And every single person in this room is a counselor. We are always telling other people what we think is true or what we think is false, what we think is right, what we think is wrong.

[ 20 : 33 ] We are always telling people, you should do this or you should not do that. We are all counselors. And to counsel people in the church, it is hard, persistent work that requires persistence, persistence, persistence.

To admonish, encourage, and help. So our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family as we first appreciate our leaders and second care for our fellow believers.

Now the third form, the third and final form of harmony in God's family. That's found in verse 15.

This one is the hardest. If you thought the other ones were tough, just wait until you get a load of this one.

Our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family as we show mercy to all people. Our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family as we show mercy to all people.

And that sounds really nice. I mean, yeah, showing mercy. That's something we should do. Yes, everybody should be showing mercy to one another. It sounds great. It sounds like something that everybody's in favor of, right? Everybody's in favor of it until they have to do it themselves.

[ 21 : 43 ] And I speak as one of those people. It sounded really great to me until I was in a tough job with a demanding boss and boy was it hard to show mercy. Just like in verse 15.

See that no one repays anyone evil for evil. But always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Now keep in mind, Paul is writing to a group of people, to these Thessalonians, that these Christians are under a ton of pressure.

They're under a lot of pressure in their city. We've read in the first two chapters of this letter, these Thessalonians, they're suffering mistreatment. They're suffering persecution, oppression from their countrymen.

Paul himself got driven out of town by an angry mob that basically extorted money out of one of his fellow believers in the church. It would be easy for these people to look for ways to retaliate, to get back at, to put in their place these abusive outsiders.

Or maybe there's somebody else in the church who's mistreating them. It'd be easy to get their justice when they've been hurt by a fellow Christian. But Paul absolutely forbids it.

[ 23 : 03 ] In Romans chapter 12, he writes something similar. He writes, Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

So what he's saying here is the reason that you and I do not get revenge, the reason you and I do not retaliate, do not get back at others, do not try to get our justice from other people, do not try to put them in their place, is because that is not our job.

That is the Lord's job. And we leave it to him. We've read in first Thessalonians several times already how the Lord is an avenger, that there is wrath to come from him for those who embrace evil and wrongdoing instead of welcoming Jesus Christ as Lord.

And so because you and I know that it is the Lord who is the one who brings justice, we can let go. We can let go of our desire to retaliate.

And in so doing, we can stop becoming like those who hurt us. Because when you retaliate, you're becoming just like the person who hurt you. The Lord will do his job.

[ 24 : 21 ] And so we can do our job and show mercy instead, just like he showed to us. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 15.

Here in verse 15, he writes that we don't retaliate. But this is important, guys. That doesn't mean we kind of become passive, that we sort of shrivel up and let other people pick on us and beat us up and that we don't do anything in response.

We don't just passively accept evil done to us. We respond. And here's how he says we respond. We do it by doing good for those who are trying to do evil.

Always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Back in Romans chapter 12, here's how Paul put it. If your enemy is hungry, feed him.

If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head. In other words, you actively look for needs.

[ 25 : 30 ] You actively look at the person who is hurting you, who is doing things against you, and you're thinking, what needs do they have? What are some areas that they could use some help in? How can I fulfill those needs?

How can I help them? Boy, that is hard. And then Paul continues in Romans chapter 12, do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. That is our strategy.

That is our tactic. Do not be overcome by evil, by becoming just like them, and retaliating and taking revenge, but instead, overcome evil with good. This is how we are meant to live as members of God's family.

As children of our Heavenly Father. We don't do this to score points with God, or to earn his favor and approval. We have it. We've already been adopted. We've already been welcomed into his family. We've already died to our old way of life.

But this is the way that God's family lives. This is how we please, and how we honor our Heavenly Father. Our great expectations encourage harmony in God's family as we appreciate our leaders, care for our fellow believers, and show mercy to all people.

[ 26 : 44 ] In the previous verses, in chapter 5, verses 9 through 11, Paul writes, that God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, whether we are alive or have died, we might live with him.

Therefore, encourage one another, and build one another up, just as you are doing. So now, what I'm going to do is, I'm going to pray, and then those of us who are Christians, we are going to affirm our unity, and our harmony in the family of God, as we celebrate communion together, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper together.

and our harmony in the family of God.