

Small Group Discussion Guide — Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

“The Church is faulty, but that is no excuse for your not joining it, if you are the Lord’s. Nor need your own faults keep you back, for the church is not an institution for perfect people, but a sanctuary for sinners saved by grace, who, though they are saved, are still sinners and need all the help they can derive from the sympathy and guidance of their fellow believers.”

-Charles Spurgeon

- What is Spurgeon saying in this quote?
- How is this, or is this not, a picture we see in the church today? What might be reasons some don’t see the need for the church? Or how might unrealistic expectations of the church lead to disappointment and discouragement? How have you seen this played out in your own life?
- In vs. 14, what three groups in the church does Paul address? What separate commands does he give us in how we are to interact with each of these three groups in need?
- Who are the “idle” (unruly)? What does it look like to “admonish” them? Why is this an uncomfortable but necessary aspect of church life? Can you give some examples of what it looks like to be “lovingly-confrontational”? How have you seen this done well, or not done well, in the past?
- Who are the “fainthearted”? What do they need specifically? How is “biblical encouragement” tied to “bringing truth to bear” on someone’s situation in life? What is “biblical” encouragement? What might this look like practically?
- Who are the weak? What do they need? Who might this be in the church?
- In vs. 14, why would Paul give this unifying command to “be patient with them all”? How might we be tempted toward impatience with one another, and why does the “sanctification process” of the Christian life require patience?
- Where are you prone toward impatience with others in the church?
- Why are Christians never to retaliate, but do good? (see Romans 12:17-19) How does leaving it to the wrath of God, and allowing God to be the one to avenge, enable us to be patient toward others, do good to all, and love our enemies?
- How can you grow in patience and long-suffering toward others? What was one practical way that we could grow in this area?