

Monday, February 25 - Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) Paul is probably referring to leaders in the church community in verse 12. For us this would include church staff, small group leaders and other ministry leaders. How can you show respect to each of them? Express your appreciation, tell them how you have been helped by their leadership and teaching, and thank them for their ministry in your life. If you say nothing, how will they know where you stand? Remember, they need and deserve your support and love.

Tuesday, February 26 – And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Don't loaf around with the lazy; warn them. Don't yell at the timid and weak; encourage and help them. At times it's difficult to distinguish between idleness and timidity. Two people may be doing nothing - one out of laziness and the other out of shyness or fear of doing something wrong. The key to ministry is sensitivity; sensing the condition of each person and offering the appropriate remedy of each situation. You can't effectively help until you know the problem. You can't apply the medicine until you know where the wound is.

Wednesday, February 27 – Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. (1 Thessalonians 5:15) This sounds like a proverb and we would do well to take Paul's advice to heart each day. We are tempted to "get back" at someone who has "gotten" us. But that is not the life Christ lived. He turned the other cheek. He loved those who beat him. He forgave those who tortured and killed him. Our key word to notice is "strive." Make your goal each day to do good. Start out each day *wanting* to do good for someone else. Try it for a week and see what happens.

Thursday, February 28 – Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Our joy, prayers, and thankfulness should not fluctuate with our circumstances or feelings. Obeying these three commands - by joyful, keep on praying, and be thankful - often goes against our natural inclinations. When we make a conscious decision to do what God says, however, we will begin to see people in a new perspective. When we do God's will, we will find it easier to be joyful and thankful. We can't spend all our time on our knees, but it is possible to have a prayerful attitude at all times. This attitude is built upon acknowledging our dependence on God, realizing his presence with us, and choosing to obey him fully. Then it will be natural for us to have quick and spontaneous prayers.

Friday, March 1 – Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22) By warning us to “not quench the Spirit,” Paul means we should not ignore or toss aside the gifts the Holy Spirit gives. Sometimes spiritual gifts are controversial, and they may cause division in the church. Rather than trying to solve the problems, some Christians prefer to smother the gifts. This impoverishes the church. We should not quench the Holy Spirit’s work in anyone’s life but encourage the full expression of these gifts to benefit the whole body of Christ. God has given us a mind to use. Paul lets us know to use the brain God gave us to make sure what we are letting in our minds is truth.

Saturday, March 2 - May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. Brothers and sisters, pray for us. Greet all God’s people with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-28) As Paul closes out his letter, he uses spirit, soul and body as a way to describe the entire person. This expression is Paul’s way of saying that God must be involved in every aspect of our life. It is wrong to think that we can separate our spiritual life from everything else, obeying God only in some ethereal sense or living for him only one day each week. Christ must control all of us, not just a “religious” part.