

Explore the Bible: Church Life and Church People

May 16, 2022

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for May 29 focuses on 2 Thessalonians 3:6-16.*

There is a perfect church in most people's minds: the perfect church, the church where there are no troubles. The perfect church where there are no complaints and just compliments. The perfect church where every believer practices God's word to the letter. The perfect church where there is no need, no hurt and no pain.

This perfect church that is in utopia does not exist. The church is filled with imperfect people. Imperfect people will learn to become disciples. The purpose of the church was never a gathering of saints. The church has a binary approach to its existence—evangelism and discipleship. I have witnessed the church's unrealistic expectations as an organization in my years of ministry. Churches need trained leaders to deal with the complexities of church life.

Set the boundary (2 Thessalonians 3:6-9)

In his closing remarks to the Thessalonian church, Paul warns church leaders to be aware and take action. He wanted them to remove themselves from church people who live in a disorderly way. The church in Thessalonica had troublemakers, and Paul wanted leaders to be aware. The first line of defense recognizes there are troublemakers in the church.

It is sad when a church over-spiritualizes problems. Church leaders are unable and unwilling to address problems or issues.

In the Hispanic culture, we are not direct, and we are not confrontational. We do not argue or have arguments. Instead, we wait until the problem grows and it may be too late, and the issues are uncontrollable.

Paul uses the word “unruly,” and Paul asks for them to be admonished in the first letter. However, it seems the problem is growing. Church leaders must be able to identify and develop leadership skills to take action about church issues.

Set the expectation (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)

Paul, in these verses, explains the main behaviors of these “unruly” brethren. They are lazy/idle. There is nothing worse than church people looking at how they can tear each other apart. It is my experience that church people who complain the most about church life are doing less for church.

At our dining table, when we pray over our meal, one of my children will call on one of my other children about not praying. My question is, how do you know someone is not praying? They stumble on an answer that reveals they were not praying either.

Paul asks for the leaders of the church at Thessalonica to address the problem of lazy Christians and to lead by example. Please notice Paul wants the leaders not just to blame lazy people, but to be the catalyst for transformation. Leaders cause change. For the church to flourish, we cannot just live by stating what is wrong with people. Church leaders need to be examples of good and courageous leadership.

Set the example (2 Thessalonians 3:13-16)

Compassion fatigue is a term used in the social work arena. According to Webster's Dictionary, compassion fatigue is the physical, emotional and psychological exhaustion experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized people.

Church leaders will set the example of doing good, setting good boundaries, setting the right expectations, and setting the example for asking for help when we need it. Please do not stop doing ministry when critics come, because they will come. The work of the ministry will be criticized by those in-house. Set the example of works of faith that those that are lazy and criticize are ashamed. Church leaders and ministers work extended hours when and no one will notice unless it is not done, but we know that the Lord rewards hard work.

Church leaders, take care of yourself and surround yourself with good people who build you up to do good works. You will need to correct unruly and lazy people. Remember that with your example, you will overcome in his name.

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