

CONTAGIOUS CHRISTIANITY

A STUDY OF 1 THESSALONIANS

STUDY TEN

Gifts to Give the Family

1 Thessalonians 5:12–15

There is one season of the year, and only one, where everyone seems to be thinking of someone else. It's remarkable.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

CHRISTMAS is a delightful time of year. Homes decked with brightly colored lights, trees trimmed to a T, stockings plump and overflowing with hidden treasures. Children wide-eyed and bursting to rip open a package. Parents teary-eyed over their children's glee.

We love it so much because it's a season of unselfish giving. Everyone is thinking of others. What's on *their* list? What don't *they* have? What brings *them* joy? When generosity decks the halls of our hearts, the spirit of giving is palpable and unrivaled. The bright lights twinkle even brighter, and the cheery music beckons us to sing along even more cheerfully.

What are the best Christmastime gifts we can give? The ones that last—deep, permanent gifts. The ones that lift up the person. The ones that cost us something. And the ones that bring glory to God because they mirror His sacrificial love and exalt Him as the greatest of all gift-givers.

In the passage we'll examine in this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, the apostle Paul hands us a shopping list for the larger family of God—gifts which embody those same qualities. These gifts aren't purchased and wrapped in paper but are wrapped in our own flesh and offered in love.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you approach the text, prepare your heart by thanking God for His generosity to you and through you in the lives of others. Record your prayer below.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul's gifts to give the family of God are essential for healthy relationships. These are more than gift ideas; they are necessities! They are just what our churches need and must have.

Read Paul's list in *1 Thessalonians 5:12–15*. As you read, look for the commands that identify each gift that Paul wants us to give one another. The phrase Paul used to begin the list is “we ask you” (*1 Thessalonians 5:12 NASB*), followed by commands. What phrase did Paul use in 5:14? How does this phrase add emphasis? How many imperatives follow this phrase?

These phrases, “we ask you” and “we urge you,” form a natural division of the items in 5:12–15. He continues in 5:16–22, which we'll save for the next *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study. For now, let's look closer at Paul's gifts to give the family of God . . . and then let's go shopping!



Observation: A God-Given Checklist

In the observation phase, simply note what the verses say, paying attention to action words, modifiers, logical connections, and any phrases that stand out to you.¹

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Gifts Kindly Requested—1 Thessalonians 5:12–13

“We ask you,” Paul begins (1 Thessalonians 5:12 NASB). These were the things Paul kindly requested on behalf of the other leaders of the church. He’s not speaking for himself. He and his companions “could have asserted [their] authority as apostles of Christ” (2:6 NASB) and expected honor or praise, but they didn’t. The church members should give honor to their local leaders, though, and Paul asks them to do that.

According to [5:12–13](#) in the NASB, in what two ways should the Thessalonians respect their leaders?

What three things do leaders do in the church that deserve respect, according to 5:12 NASB?

Paul made another request from the young church at the end of 5:13. It reads as a command. While it almost sounds cliché, what did he ask?

It may not sound terribly profound, but it is a winner in a congregation. A congregation that gives each other this gift of peace is one that cannot be separated by a split. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Gifts Urgently Needed—1 Thessalonians 5:14–15

Intensifying his gift list, Paul began, “We urge you, brothers” (1 Thessalonians 5:14). In five succinct phrases, he penned five more gifts. Read *1 Thessalonians 5:14–15* in three different versions: NLT, NASB, and NIV. In the middle column, record Paul’s gifts, phrased here as commands. Then, in the right column, paraphrase the gifts/commands in your own words.

Scripture	Gift / Command	Paraphrase
5:14a		
5:14b		
5:14c		
5:14d		
5:15		

The good thing about these gifts is that they are always in season and they all come from within us. All you have to wrap them in is your skin, and the gifts are appropriately available. How needed they are. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Checklist—“Asking” and “Urging”

Let’s dig a bit deeper into the natural division of the list, moving from “asking” to “urging.” Paul asked that the Thessalonians respect their leaders in two ways: “recognize” them and “regard them very highly in love” (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 NASB). He also asked that they “live peacefully with each other” (5:13). But he urged them “to warn” the lazy, “encourage” the timid, “take tender care” of the weak, “be patient with everyone,” don’t pay back “evil for evil,” and do good to “all people” (5:14–15).

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Why do you believe Paul grouped these as he did? What are the common denominators within each group? What does the list suggest about Paul’s knowledge of that church?

Compared with the other gifts on his list, Paul spent the most ink addressing how to respect leaders. Leaders may be men or women, clergy or laity, older or younger—anyone who guides others in their spiritual walk. Because they “labor,” “are in leadership,” and give “instruction” (1 Thessalonians 5:12 NASB), they are due recognition and regard.

The Greek root word Paul used for “recognize” is *oida* (5:12 NASB). Review this term in Mounce’s Greek dictionary at billmounce.com or consult a [commentary](#). What insight does your research add to your understanding of the meaning of this gift?

The Greek word for “regard” is *hegeomai*—which means to esteem. Then Paul added, “very highly in love” (5:13 NASB). What did Paul mean? How does he want us to love our leaders and yet not glorify them or put them on a pedestal?

The Greek word for “lazy” in the NLT or “unruly” in the NASB is *ataktos*, which appears only here in the New Testament. According to Mounce’s Greek dictionary at billmounce.com, it’s a term also used for disorderly soldiers. Why do you think Paul used this word? What was he saying about these unruly believers, and what should they be admonished to do (see [4:11–12](#))?

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In the family of God there is to be, if you please, a salute, because of the work certain individuals have undertaken. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Balancing Peace and Admonition

Paul's list includes two vital but difficult-to-harmonize gifts: peace and admonition. To help us apply these principles, let's consider other passages.

Read *Romans 12:9–13, 18; 14:19*. What is the relationship between love, goodness, devotion, preference, edification, and pursuing peace? How do they work together? Regarding pursuing peace with everyone, what caveat did Paul include in 12:18?

What does *Colossians 3:15* add to your understanding about the principle of peace? Why is it more than a simple human virtue?

*This is for the child of God. This is not for you to take to your unsaved neighbor and correct his or her lifestyle. If a person is without Christ, leave his or her lifestyle alone. It takes power to change and to clean up a lifestyle.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



Application: Resources and Reminders

God has built into His family all the resources we need to edify others. Pastor Chuck reminds us of three resources always at our disposal.

First, *in God's Word we have all the truth we ever need*. As we read it, we find our correct path.

Second, *in God's Spirit we have all the power we will ever need*. Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to forgive, to be patient, and to encourage others, so we must rely on Him.

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Third, *in God's family we have all the challenge we will ever need.* The family of God includes people of every type and maturity level to relate with. Some who are like us will offer objectivity to help us see ourselves as we really are, and others who are different can broaden and deepen our thinking.

From our passage, what gift or gifts to be given within the family of God come most naturally to you? When and how have you given those gifts to build up others?

Conversely, what gift or gifts come least naturally to you and are a struggle to share? Why? What resource can most help you to grow in this area? God's Word? God's Spirit? God's family?

Is there a leader who has positively influenced your spiritual growth? Have you expressed appreciation to this person or recognized him or her? Describe how this person has blessed you and how you might like to regard him or her with love.

One final reminder. A church is not an edifice, nor an architectural dream, nor a place to impress the public. The church is a family of people in whom Christ reveals Himself. So, to experience the joy of giving, what gift can you offer God's family? You have the list before you. Pick one to give and experience the joy of Christmas any time of year!

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, this family truth is much needed. I am thankful it's stated so well by You in Your Book. Now I ask You to help me build up the church. Start with me. May enthusiasm, cheer, love, and forgiveness become so infectious that it sweeps through the church. In the name of the Savior, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1984, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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