The Church: A Culture of Ministry

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us.!

Now, why do I remember that in a random Sunday in January of 2002? Well, that was the year that the New England Patriots had made it to the Super Bowl.
And we would go on to win that game and win our first of six Super Bowls. And a dynasty was born, but something that hit me about that particular night, I don't know if you remember this or not, I recognize some of you weren't even born yet, but the Patriots did something that night that no other team had done, and they actually defied the NFL.
And they were fined for it as well. You see, the NFL had a long-standing tradition of doing player introductions to begin the Super Bowl.
And with these player introductions, they would announce a specific player and what position he played as they came out onto the field.
[1:43] Well, the Patriots decided they were going to enter the field together as a team. You see, if you remember the historical context, this was the Super Bowl after 9-11.

And the Patriots wanted to display before the nation that there was unity, and there was a togetherness, and there was a locking arm-in-arm-arm together, signifying not only that which a football team would go out and be introduced as, but more importantly, that we as a nation would lock together arm-in-arm, shoulder-to-shoulder, and be unified in the midst of tragedy.
Well, on a far greater scale, when we look at the church, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the church as we know it, is to be a church that is marked by unity, that is marked by being together, is marked by standing shoulder-to-shoulder, it's marked by peace, even in the greater context of this passage.
See, the church is where there is to be a culture of ministry, a culture of ministry, a culture of ministry that expects complete involvement by every member, with discerning ministry, while exercising patience with them all.
The church is where there is a culture of ministry that expects complete involvement by every member, with discerning ministry, while exercising patience with them all.
[3:56] Well, look with me in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. If you've been here for some time in our church, you know that our pastor just recently finished on Sunday evenings 1 Thessalonians, and I commend you to go to our website and listen to those messages, the powerful messages coming straight out of 1 Thessalonians.

And I did have his permission, so to speak, to go back and dig a little bit deeper into this particular verse, even though he covered it in the greater context.
And again, I'd encourage you to go listen to that. Great sermon. It's a two-part series over this passage. So I just want to read the surrounding passage here, and then we're going to hone in on verse 14.
Look with me beginning in verse 12 of 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. 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.
[5:22] Help the weak. Be patient with them all. See that no one repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

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Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.
That's the surrounding context, but I want to call our attention to verse 14 and just look at three particular observations, if you will, or challenges for us that come right out of this particular verse. And the first is the expectation of ministry. The expectation of ministry is for all to be involved. The expectation of ministry is for all to be involved.
[6:35] Where do we see that? Verse 14. And we urge you, brothers. This construction in this particular text here carries with it the weight of addressing, by using the term brothers, that he's addressing the church.

And we know that encompasses brothers and sisters alike. This isn't women, you get a pass, and this is only addressed to men. No, this is for everyone who is involved in the church, who is a part of the church.
He says this even in verse 12, we ask you brothers to respect, and then he hones in on the leaders that the Lord has blessed the church with. But then in verse 14, he says and carries with it the idea of the expectation that you'd be involved in ministry.
We see that. We urge you, brothers. But if we also look at the Greek word for urge, it's the word parakaleo. It means to come alongside of, of providing help to someone, of actually being shoulder to shoulder with them, or locking arms with them.
It's the idea that you wouldn't abandon, that you would be present. But as we're going to see in the next point here momentarily, it carries with it also the idea that there may be confrontation out of concern that leads to biblical change.
[8:21] It comes from Dr. J. Adams. The idea of confrontation out of concern that leads to biblical change.

Means this, you would be involved in people's lives. That you're not a Lone Ranger Christian. You're not someone who could take the church or leave the church. You are to be involved in the life of the church. Why? Because this is God's design.
This is God's plan. This is God's ideas. The church itself, herself, would be as the bride of Christ. And so every born-again believer, everyone who places faith in Jesus Christ alone, is planted in to the body of Christ, and you become a family.
And in the family of God, that carries with it the idea that we come alongside of each other. And it's not just the paid staff who does ministry.
[9:31] It's not just volunteers who are in leadership positions who do ministry. It's every member is to provide ministry one to the other.

Perikaleo, to come alongside of. This is an expectation. We see it that Paul clearly describes this in 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14.
We see it in Ephesians 4 as well. We see it in 1 Peter that we're just reminded of this idea that God is the one who gifts every believer for works of service within the ministry of the church.
And that is the expectation for every believer. Now, one of the things that we do here in our church and I'm so thankful for is a class called Membership Matters.
And our pastor and his wife lead that. And we offer it about every other month. And we just, we stand amazed at how many people the Lord just keeps sending our way.
[10:37] And he keeps adding to the number here of the body of believers at First Baptist Mustang. Well, you know, if you've been through this, that you've covered this in class.

The idea that you're not just to sit and soak, but that you're to pour out. You're to be used of the Lord in the lives of other people within the church.
It's not just being a spectator. It's being involved and serving. And Paul reminds us of this here, that the expectation is that all of us would be involved in ministry.
We urge you, brothers, urging being parakaleo to come alongside of. So I ask you, what about you? Are you involved in the ministry of the church?
Do you actively engage in coming alongside of others? See, here's a great danger that happens to us. Sometimes we think, well, Jeff, you don't understand.
[11:44] I've served for years in ministry, and it's time for me just to sit back. It's time for me just to receive. And while that may be the case, maybe there is a season that is coming for you that you do need a sabbatical rest, if you will.

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That was never meant to be permanent. And that's the great danger. The danger is is that we can tell ourselves and convince ourselves, I paid my dues.
I served my time. I've done that which is required of me in the church, and now is the time for me just to sit back and let the younger folk take over.
They've got more energy. They've got more drive. They've got more vision. Listen, the New Testament knows nothing of that. What the New Testament knows is that we who are in the church would function as God would have us to function, and the expectation is that we will serve until He calls us home or He returns.
And again, don't misunderstand me. It does not mean that there are not times in which we do take a break. Yes, and in a church that's growing, that should be readily available to us.
[13:05] That there are times that we have more people to serve than we have positions to serve in. And that's a wonderful blessing from the Lord. But the expectation is you would come alongside and you would serve.

Well, let's dive a little bit deeper, though, into this because point number two is the discernment of ministry. the discernment of ministry.
And as we move on in this passage, he's going to list three distinct groups of people, hence calling for discernment in ministry.
Now again, he's still addressing the church. He's still addressing those who are in the church. And so, he addresses three particular groups. And you see them right here in order.
Admonish the idle. Maybe your Bible has a footnote that says the disorderly or the unruly or the undisciplined.
[14:10] That's one group. Encourage the faint-hearted. That's a second group. Help the weak. It's a third group.

So let's just walk through each of these groups and why we look at the discernment of ministry as we minister to each one.
Specifically to three different groups of people. And before we do that, let me just encourage you with point number one again. The only way you exercise discernment is by being involved and understanding what people are going through in their lives.
Because what we don't want to do is admonish those who need encouragement. We don't want to help those who need admonishment.
No, he's very specific here. There are three distinct groups and there are three ways that we minister to them. But the way that you understand what people are going through is being involved in their lives.
[15:23] Being more than just aware that they attend church with you. But hearing them, listening to them, asking questions. And so, let's look at each of these three.

Number one, the disorderly or the undisciplined or the idle. in the Greek and used in extra-biblical literature, this idea of this word that he uses for the unruly or the undisciplined or the disorderly would carry with it the idea of a soldier who is not keeping the ranks or a soldier that is out of step. Someone who is not taking care of their responsibilities. There are those who are rebellious in attitude.
A commanding officer tells me to do this. Well, I don't want to do it that way and I'm going to do things my way. Well, what happens in the military if you take that approach?
There's going to be discipline, right? Because we need order. We need a chain of command. We need someone who is making decisions and then relaying that to the troops.
[16:48] Well, what Paul says here is what we do in the church that requires discernment is that we admonish those who are unruly or out of line or undisciplined.

And what we do is we admonish them. It's where we get the term newthetic or newthetic counseling.
It's the idea of biblical counseling. Biblically addressing one in a caring kind of warning.
It's an exhortation. It's teaching. It is correcting. It's not just winking an eye at. It's not just turning and looking the other direction.
No, it would mean that you're giving instruction. That if somebody is on the path to destruction, we would admonish them and warn them and let them know while this may be enjoyable for a season, the end result is going to be destruction.
[17:56] we see this word in Acts 20 verse 31. We see it in Romans 15 verse 14.

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I have confidence in you that you are able to admonish one another. You're able to instruct one another. We see it in 1 Corinthians 4 14.
We also see it in Colossians 1 28 and in chapter 3 verse 16 of Colossians. We already saw it in verse 12.
You see it there. We ask you brothers to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you. And then again here in verse 14. And then we see it in 2 Thessalonians 3 15.
This word for a caring kind of warning. Exhorting, teaching, correcting. It means we're not ashamed and we're bold.
[19:07] But while we correct we do it out of care, concern, and love. That's what drives us. Not sitting in judgment, not looking down on, not in a haughty way, not out of arrogance that you don't have your life together and I do and so follow me.

No, this is a warning biblically. It's instructing biblically. So that's what we do with those who are undisciplined or disorderly.
In the specific context, it would have been used for those who were idle. We see it in 2 Thessalonians as well. Those who were awaiting the Lord's return and so they just simply didn't work.
They were like, I'm not going to work, I'm not going to carry through with my responsibilities because I'm just waiting on the Lord's return. And Paul is telling the Thessalonians, hey, no, listen, they need to work, they need to be responsible, they need to be faithful, you need to correct them until the Lord returns.
And so we do that when we teach and preach the Word of God day in and day out, week in, week out, Sunday after Sunday and Wednesday after Wednesday.
[20:31] But the second group, you see it there, is encourage the faint-hearted, the timid, the discouraged, literally, it means the small sold, S-O-U-L-E-D, the small sold.

There are those who are skittish, if you will. They are on edge. They are discouraged.
They are fearful. And what does Paul say? We are to encourage them, literally, to speak alongside of.
Isn't that a great word picture? We already had urge you, which is to come alongside of, parakaleo, I come alongside of you, but then we also have to speak alongside of you.
And what do we speak? Well, when we speak to them, we encourage them, we comfort them, we console them, we fan the flame, we are cheering them on.
[21:48] What do we do? We remind them of biblical promises. We remind them of the character and nature of who God is. We're reminding them that we are supporting them in prayer.

We're reminding them that many times for those that are faint-hearted, they feel like they're all alone. And what do you do in the ministry of the church?
You're simply saying you're not alone. I'm right here with you. I'll walk alongside of you. And listen, that does not mean you will have the answer to every why question they have in their life.
But you point them to the who is faithful in their life, and that is God. So we're speaking alongside of them. We're speaking the Word of God to them.
We are praying for them. We're reminding them that they are not alone. We call it the ministry even of presence. Not with a TS, although that's good and can be an encouragement, but presence as in your physical presence that is right there, and you're just reminding them of what the Word of God says and who God is.
[23:06] Oh, we see a beautiful picture of this in 1 Samuel 23, verse 16, and the relationship between Jonathan and David, and when David was downcast as Saul was trying to take his life, and there in 1 Samuel 23, 16, that God used Jonathan in a way to strengthen David's hands.

Isn't that a great picture? That he strengthened him by what? Reminding him what God had promised him. He's reminding them who God is, what he has said, and that he is not alone, and Jonathan is simply there, and what is he doing?
He's providing encouragement. Oh, folks, don't ever, ever underestimate how God can use you encouraging a fellow believer, a text message sent, a card written, a phone call made, an invitation to dinner or lunch or coffee, that God uses that to put wind in the sails of the discouraged and the disheartened and those who need encouragement.

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That is the ministry that we provide to the faint-hearted, but there's a third group, and the third group is the weak, and we are to help the weak.
Now, the weak could carry with it a couple of different nuances here and meanings, that it could be those who are physically suffering, those who were, and again, during biblical times, we didn't have the advancement of modern medicine the way we have it now, and so there were many who did not live long lives, who just experienced a lot of physical suffering, and so the weak could be those who are just suffering physically, or it could be the weak would be those that we see even in Romans chapter 14, the idea of the strong and the weak as far as living out the Christian faith, those who are weak in that they can't partake in certain foods, out of fear that it's been offered to an idol, and Paul gives instruction there in Romans 14, the idea of the strong and the weak within the church.
[25:36] Whatever the meaning here, it carries with it the same idea that there are those who need to be helped. Helped. And what does it mean to help?

This is great when we see it in the Greek. It means to hold firmly. to cling to, to cleave, to support, to take interest in them, to pay attention to them, or to remain loyal to them.
One commentator said, those whom society walks over and puts down are lifted up and given support by the church.
We hold firmly to them. We cling to them. We support them. We take interest in them. We see some cross references in Matthew 6, verse 4, and in Luke chapter 16, verse 13, and in Titus 1, 9, the idea of helping the weak, those that are suffering, those that are in need of assistance, those who need to be held up, that we literally do that.
And the way that we do that is by taking an interest in them, paying attention to them, and supporting them. Well, you see three distinct groups here that require discernment.
[27:18] That's the discernment of ministry. Knowing who is unruly or undisciplined and needs to be admonished, knowing who is faint-hearted or timid or discouraged and needs to be encouraged, and then knowing those who are weak and they need to be helped requires discernment.

Let me just pause here for direct application. Do you know that ministry that is provided by others to us means the ministry you've received from others?
And I dare say all of us in this room have received ministry from others at one point in our lives. Do you know that ministry was never meant to end with you?
ministry that's provided by others is meant to be passed on from you to others. So when you've been admonished and you've been warned and you've been told to get in step and you've been told to repent or you've been told that you need correction in your lives, then you're able to do that with others that God providentially puts into your life.
It wasn't meant just to be an end in and of itself in your life. Or when you've received encouragement when you've been discouraged. It wasn't meant just to lift you up, but as it lifts you up, then God leads other people along your path and then you provide the same ministry to them.
[29:02] And the same thing with the weak. When we have been weak and we needed others to cling to us and hold us up and provide support for us, that it wasn't just for us in and of ourselves, it is a ministry that we receive but then we look for opportunities to do the same with others.

Let me dig down a little bit deeper. Do you know that every personal devotion that you have might be used of the Lord in another person's life? You think, I'm just spending time alone with the Lord. I'm just praying. I'm just reading the Word. I'm going through my Bible reading plan. And then you read the Word and you're praying the Word and you're meditating on the Word and lo and behold, later that day, someone comes across your path that you think, oh my goodness, that which I read this morning could be admonishment in their lives or used in an admonishing way in their lives or an encouraging way or in a helping way.
That's the cycle of ministry. Every Bible study, every D group, every Sunday school class lesson, every sermon that we listen to, every podcast that we may listen to, it's not just meant to end with you, but God uses it in your life and then you're a conduit of ministry.
God pours through you ministry to others. God bless. And so that's the discernment of ministry to each one.
[30:50] But then our third and final point, the challenge of ministry. The challenge of ministry. And if you've read on in this verse, you know what the challenge is.

It's that last phrase. be patient with them all. Be patient with them all.

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Patience carries with it the idea of a call to be long-suffering, to be tolerant in a biblical sense, not in the worldly sense, but to tolerate others through patience, to be forbearing with them.
Means you're going to bear up under the weight of. You're going to be patient with them when you admonish them. And they do the opposite of what you've admonished them to do.
Have you ever been there? See, child-rearing. You admonish. You correct. You challenge.
[32:11] And they do the opposite. And then they act shocked that there's consequences for that.
All the while, we're patient. Or how about with those who are timid and those who are discouraged and you think, man, I just keep taking you back to the Word of God.

I'm reminding you that God is our strength. That God is our refuge. That God is a very present help in the day of trouble. Psalm 46, verse 1.
That I'm reminding you of that. And then you leave my presence and then you wander about and you scurry about and you think the sky is falling. And you forget.
We're patient. How many times have you forgotten the promises of God? The character, the attributes of God.
Or you help the weak and you're helping them and you think in your mind, okay, we're past me holding you up. You need to be strengthened enough now to move on.
[33:22] You need to be able to minister to others and and we continue to hold them up and we think according to our timetable, they should be ready.

We're patient. We're patient with them all. That's a challenge of ministry, of long suffering, of forbearing.
And let me ask you, how are you doing with patience toward others? you think about the people in your life that God has providentially put around you.
It could be family, it could be co-workers, it could be church members, it could be neighbors, it could be other families on a ball team or band or wherever you find yourself in extracurricular activities that God has providentially placed people into your lives.
sin. The question is, are you patient? The specific context would say, those who are in the church, it's the ministry of the church, which is the challenge to be patient with them all.
[34:41] But I would ask you this, have you forgotten how patient our Lord has been with you? sometimes we grow in impatience, all the while forgetting, oh God, you've been patient with me.

And so, we look at the expectation of ministry, that everyone is involved, the discernment of ministry, it's to each one in whatever specific group we find ourselves in and ministering to, and then the challenge of ministry is to be patient with them all.
In conclusion, I want to draw your attention to the one who did this perfectly, the one who is our example, people.
And that is our Lord Jesus Christ. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ himself got involved in people's lives.
He got involved in people's lives that others had said they're outcasts. See the leper. He was involved in their lives and he let them touch him.
[36:07] See the woman with the issue of blood. And he taught about what it is to be the good Samaritan. The one who would take time and minister to what should have been an enemy.

Jesus was involved in the lives of others, but then Jesus himself is the picture, the model of perfection in knowing who to admonish.
who to encourage and who to help. Jesus would admonish those who were in their sins and he would warn them that if you die, if you're stuck in your sins, you will die.
John 8 21. He encouraged the faint-hearted in that Matthew chapter 11 verse 28, come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.
Then he helps the weak. We see this on display all through the gospels upholding those who are weak, whether physically, spiritually, emotionally.
[37:27] They were harassed and they were helpless and they were like sheep without a shepherd and he cried out to the father on behalf of them.

We see this through the life and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I would just ask you, do you know him?
Or even better, does he know you? My sheep know me and I know my sheep, John 10.
And today you can know him. If he's calling you unto himself, if he's drawing you unto himself, then the Bible tells us that we turn to him and that is repentance and then place faith, that is trust in him,

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that we call out to him through repentance, a turning about, an about face, and from the direction we're going in our own lives to embracing Christ, we look to Christ and we trust Christ.
Friends, I would submit to you that there's no way we can live out 1 Thessalonians 5.14 apart from being found in Christ.
[38:53] So call upon him today. And then for the believer, you say, I know he knows me. I know he's called me unto himself.

Then the challenge of this passage of Scripture is now living this out. Am I involved in ministry? Am I discerning in ministry?
Am I listening and asking questions and understanding different people that compose and make up the church? And then am I being patient with them all?
Let's pray together. Our Father, we do pause and thank you again for the ministry of your word. And even as we close our Bibles, and for many in this room, we'll head to Sunday school class and open it again and study from another book or perhaps an attribute of God or another study that you would continue to challenge them with who you are.
We want to be found faithful, Father, as your church, performing the ministry of the church for your glory, for your namesake.
[40:17] And so we pray that you would be with us after we leave this place, working in our lives. We ask in Jesus' name and all God's people said, Amen.

Well, before you're dismissed, let me just encourage you, especially if you're new here today or you would like us to follow up with you, you can take that same connection card and you can fill that out and drop it in the giving boxes and we would love to connect with you and follow up with you.
Let me remind you, we will have evening service tonight. Men, there will be the institute at 345 and then we'll have evening service at 5 o'clock. We don't have any of our choirs going on tonight, so just our evening service and Joey will be preaching.
We're firing up another sermon series on our favorite chapters. So the pastoral staff will be rotating through our favorite chapters in the word of God and so tonight Joey will kick us off with that series.
And so again, thank you for being here. God bless you. And you are dismissed. On behalf of First Baptist Church of Mustang, we want to thank you for joining us this morning for our live stream broadcast.
[41:33] We are so thankful for the gift of technology and that we are able to reach so many people, not only across the state and in our nation, but around the world. And what a truly indescribable gift that is.

I do want to encourage you, if at all possible, if you are able to be here in person, there is no substitute for gathering with the people of God in person.
So we encourage you to be here in person at any one of our services. But once again, if we can help you in any way, please feel free to contact us and we would love to serve you in any way possible.
Have a great day. Thank you.
Thank you.

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