Healthy relationships which build the spiritual Body (1 Thessalonians 5:14–15)

Every believer, as a member of the Body of Christ, is responsible to contribute to the health of the Body. We do so by responding to the needs of others case-by-case, always with patience, and resisting evil as we pursue good.

I. ***Respond case-by-case to needs.***

1. *Warn the idle.*

   The "idle" are those who are "truant," failing to work as they should and being busy-bodies (cf. 2 Thess 3:6, 7, 11). Admonish them (cf. 5:12) but correcting and warning them concerning their behavior. The leaders (elders) are examples to the congregation of laboring and admonishing. All who are spiritual (Gal 6:1) can restore those who fall, and every believer should strive to be so mature (Rom 15:14).

2. *Encourage the timid.*

   The "timid" are not the shy but those who easily despair (cf. ESV and NKJV, the "fainthearted.") They need comfort and consoling (not admonition). Remind them of truths which give comfort.

3. *Help the weak.*

   The weak are probably not the physically or sociologically "weak", nor even those with "weak" consciences, since the instructions for them elsewhere are different. Here the "weak" are most likely those who fall easily to temptation or who might fail in the face of persecution. Don't lose sight of them, but hold them up in their times of weakness. Remind them of God's truth (Eph 6:14; Col 1:9–11) and stand with them in their struggles.

There is not one response that fits all needs. Admonition, comfort, or help should be offered on a case-by-case basis, as each has need.

II. ***Respond with patience to the needy.***

Patience is a product of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23), an answer to prayer (Col 1:9–11), yet something we must choose to put on (Col 3:12). It should be a general characteristic of the believer (Eph 4:2), yet has special application in certain situations (cf. 2 Tim 2:24–25; 4:2).

Though "all" could refer to all believers or all people, in this context it probably refers to those he just listed: the idle, timid and weak. (Cf. 1 Cor 5:7–13.) Such "needy" people do not necessarily change quickly. Those who help need patience.

III. ***Respond against any desire for vengeance and be actively kind.***

1. *Stop any attempt at vengeance.*

   Neither seek revenge nor allow other believers to seek revenge. It does not belong in the Body of Christ. Though the peace-maker is blessed (Matt 5:9), here the focus appears to be stop believers from being vengeful, since the next command continues to be directed to believers.

2. *Pursue the good for all.*

   "Be kind" (NIV) is more aggressive than it sounds, "pursue the good for others." It is not a command to make others do good (who might seek vengeance), but for all believers to pursue good for others.

   Being kind to other believers should be easy, but our own sinfulness and that of others can make it a challenge. Even more so, is this true about "everyone else."

Actively look for ways in which you can do good to others. Exercise wisdom. Don't expect thanks. Consider "small" ways to do good. Be like your Father in heaven who does good to all (Matt 5:43–48).

Just as healthy physical bodies have functioning members, so also the Body of Christ should have properly functioning spiritual members to be healthy. There must be mutual care and avoidance of harm. We interact on the basis of what is truly needed, always with patience, and never to return evil with evil. Pursue what is good for all.

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