

October 26/27, 2024

"Family Rules"

Pastor Aaron Buer



## **SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.**

### **2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament**

**October:** Read Daniel, Hosea, Joel and Amos to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

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## Day 1 [1 Thessalonians 5:12-28](#) | Family Rules

**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.** 1 Thessalonians 5:12

The church in Thessalonica is a young, vibrant community of new believers. Paul likely spent just a few weeks with them before being forced to leave due to persecution. While writing back to this fledgling church, he closes his letter with a series of practical instructions—almost like family rules. These aren't harsh regulations but loving guidelines for how to live together as the family of God. Like any healthy family, the Thessalonian believers needed clear expectations for how to treat one another and function as a community.

We often bristle at rules, especially in our individualistic culture. Yet healthy families—whether biological, adoptive or spiritual—thrive when there are clear expectations and guidelines for how to treat each other. As part of God's family, we're called to be contributors to the life of the church, be open to correction and to be for one another. These "family rules" aren't meant to restrict us but to help us flourish together as we represent Jesus and his Gospel to the world.

**TODAY:** Take time to thank God for your church family. Pray that our church will be marked by healthy relationships that draw others to Jesus. Consider praying: "Father, help us to be a church family that reflects your character. Show me how to play my part in creating a community where people can belong, grow and live with purpose. Amen."

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Joel 3](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Look for the prophecy of judgment and restoration. Consider how Jesus will bring final judgment and restoration ([Matthew 25:31-32, 46](#)).

## Day 2 [2 Thessalonians 3:7-8](#) | Contributor

**We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.**

2 Thessalonians 3:7-8

Paul and his companions set a powerful example during their time in Thessalonica. As a skilled leatherworker, Paul labors at his trade in the cool, early morning and warm, late afternoons while teaching about Jesus during midday breaks and evenings. He models how being part of the church family means contributing. He calls the believers to acknowledge those who work hard among them, to warn the idle, encourage the disheartened and help the weak ([1 Thessalonians 5:12-14](#)). The church family thrives when everyone contributes according to their gifts and abilities—some through leadership, others through service, encouragement or practical help.

We live in a consumer culture that trains us to evaluate churches based on what they offer us. But God's design for church family is different. God calls us to be contributors in the church, not consumers. When we hold back our gifts, time and resources, both we and the church miss out. Church membership is one way we show our desire to contribute to the life of the church. Ada Bible calls members to live with a servant's heart, develop healthy relationships and live with a thirst for and obedience to God and his Word. God has given each of us unique abilities and experiences to build up his family.

**TODAY:** Consider whether you are a consumer or a contributor in our church family. Take a step toward being a contributor. Visit [adabile.org/serving](http://adabile.org/serving) to find opportunities to serve or talk to your small group about how you can engage more deeply in the church community.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Amos 1-2](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Pay attention to God's judgment against injustice. Reflect on how Jesus upholds justice and mercy ([Matthew 12:17-21](#)).

## Day 3 [1 Thessalonians 5:12-13](#) | Open to Admonishment

**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.** 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers that spiritual leaders in the church are responsible for gently correcting and guiding them to follow Jesus. These leaders work among the people, not above them, humbly providing care and guidance. The word "admonish" carries the idea of helping someone see the truth with gentleness—like a loving parent pointing a child toward what's best. Paul urges the church to recognize their leaders and be open to the admonishment they give to guide them in their new life with Jesus.

We need spiritual leaders who care for us and speak truth into our lives. Receiving correction requires humility. Our teaching pastors care for us by teaching what Scripture reveals about how following Jesus impacts our choices, attitudes and actions. When we reach out to a campus pastor for care, he may guide us in changing our response to a situation. When we talk with a women's ministry director about our struggling marriage, she might gently warn us about how our actions add to the struggle. A youth ministry leader may point out that a certain choice goes against God's plan for us. Spiritual growth happens when we're open to receiving a warning like "this isn't what God wants for you" and are willing to change direction.

**TODAY:** Ask God to open you to correction. "Lord, thank you for our leaders who work hard among us, care for us and admonish us to live according to your Word. Give me a humble heart that is open to your correction through my spiritual leaders. Help me respond with gratitude when others care enough to speak truth into my life. Amen."

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Amos 3-4](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

## Day 4 [1 Thessalonians 5:13-15](#) | Pursue Peace

**Live in peace with each other. 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 5:13-14

Paul gives the Thessalonian church clear instructions about pursuing peace. The concept goes far beyond avoiding conflict—it's about actively seeking *shalom*, God's vision of harmony, well-being and flourishing. Two key principles emerge: don't seek revenge when wronged and actively pursue what benefits others. He seems to assume they will get hurt. The difference is how they respond. In their culture, honor and reputation often led to cycles of retaliation. Paul's instruction to break this cycle is shocking. He calls them to a new way of handling conflict and actively seeking each other's well-being, reflecting God's character.

We demonstrate Jesus to the world through how we treat each other in the church family. Sooner or later, we will experience a hurt in the church. We are all still growing to become more like Jesus. Peace isn't just the absence of conflict—it's actively seeking the good of others. When someone wrongs us, we're called to break the cycle of retaliation. Instead of payback, we pursue what builds up our church family. Building up the church family means having difficult conversations one-on-one rather than talking about others behind their backs. It means choosing to de-escalate tensions rather than escalate them. When we pursue peace this way, we create a community that draws people to Jesus.

**TODAY:** Identify one person in your church family whose well-being you can actively pursue this week. How can you encourage them or strengthen your relationship with them? If there's tension in a relationship, consider having a conversation to restore harmony.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Amos 5-6](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note Israel's hypocritical worship. Consider how Jesus calls for true worship ([John 4:23-24](#)).

## Day 5 [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#) | Warn, Encourage, Help

**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

Paul gives the Thessalonian believers three key actions for caring for each other: warn, encourage and help. These aren't suggestions but urgent instructions for building a healthy church family. Each action requires intentional engagement—warning with gentleness, encouraging with sincerity and helping with practical support. Warning means helping others see the truth in love. Encouraging involves coming alongside those who are struggling or celebrating those who persevere. Helping means taking the initiative to support those who can't carry their burdens alone.

We can't practice these actions with everyone in our church family, but we can do so for *someone*. Whether it's our small group or a few close friends, we're called to build relationships where we can speak truth, offer encouragement and provide tangible help. These actions might include bringing a meal to someone going through a difficult season, celebrating a friend's spiritual growth or gently pointing out areas where someone might be drifting from God's path. When we commit to warning, encouraging and helping each other, our church looks more like the family God intends it to be.

**TODAY:** Choose one or two people within the church to build this kind of relationship with. Talk with them about committing to warn, encourage and help each other on your spiritual journeys. These people could be your small group or a ministry team you serve with. Send a text today to start the conversation.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Amos 7-9](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the imagery of a plumb line as a standard for judgment. Consider how Jesus is our perfect plumb line, offering us mercy and pardon through his life, death and resurrection.