

# 1 Thessalonians 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

## Analysis

**And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you**—erōtōmen de hymas, adelphoi, eidenai tous kopiōntas en hymin kai proistamenous hymōn en Kyriō kai nouthetountas hymas (ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν Κυρίῳ καὶ νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς). Paul transitions to church order (vv. 12-22). Leaders are described three ways:

1. kopiōntas (κοπιῶντας, 'laboring to exhaustion')—ministry is hard work, not honored position
2. proistamenous en Kyriō (προϊσταμένους ἐν Κυρίῳ, 'leading/ruling in the Lord')—exercising oversight under Christ's authority
3. nouthetountas (νουθετοῦντας, 'admonishing/warning')—confronting sin and error.

**To know them** (eidenai, εἰδέναι, 'to know/recognize/appreciate')—not mere awareness but respectful recognition of their ministry.

Churches need leaders; leaders need recognition. The three-fold description emphasizes servant-leadership: toiling laborers, not domineering lords (1 Pet 5:3); rulers 'in the Lord,' not autonomous authorities; admonishers who warn, not flatterers who placate. Biblical eldership combines affectionate care (like nursing mothers, 2:7) with firm admonition (like fathers, 2:11).

## Historical Context

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The Thessalonian church was young (months old) without established leadership structures. Paul apparently appointed leaders during his brief ministry (cf. Acts 14:23) who continued pastoring after his departure. Some members may have resisted these leaders' authority, especially admonition. Paul establishes pastoral authority: leaders who labor, rule, and admonish deserve recognition. This balanced authoritarianism (clergy lording over laity) and egalitarianism (rejecting all leadership). Biblical church polity requires both servant-leaders and submissive members (Heb 13:17), authority exercised humbly and received willingly.

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How do you recognize and appreciate those who labor, lead, and admonish in your church?
2. What evidence demonstrates that your church leaders exercise servant-authority ('in the Lord') rather than domineering control?
3. How do you respond to spiritual admonition—with defensiveness or with teachability?

## Interlinear Text

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Ἐρωτῶμεν	δὲ	ὑμᾶς	ἀδελφοί	εἰδέναι	τοὺς	κοπιῶντας	
<b>we beseech</b>	<b>And</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>brethren</b>	<b>to know</b>	<b>them which</b>	<b>labour</b>	
G2065	G1161	G5209	G80	G1492	G3588	G2872	
ἐν	ὑμῖν	καὶ	προϊσταμένους	ὑμῶν	ἐν	κυρίῳ	καὶ
<b>among</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>are over</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>among</b>	<b>the Lord</b>	<b>and</b>
G1722	G5213	G2532	G4291	G5216	G1722	G2962	G2532
νουθετοῦντας	ὑμᾶς						
<b>admonish</b>	<b>you</b>						
G3560	G5209						

## Additional Cross-References

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**Hebrews 13:17** (Parallel theme): Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

**Hebrews 13:7** (Parallel theme): Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

**1 Corinthians 16:18** (Parallel theme): For they have refreshed my spirit and your's: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

**1 Corinthians 16:16** (Parallel theme): That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.

**1 Corinthians 15:10** (Parallel theme): But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

**1 Thessalonians 5:14** (Parallel theme): Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

**Luke 10:7** (Parallel theme): And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

**Titus 1:3** (Parallel theme): But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;

**Acts 20:35** (References Lord): I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

**Acts 20:28** (Parallel theme): Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.