



1 THESSALONIANS

GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-12

MAIN IDEA

We can know God's will for our lives.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

What is the meaning of life? is an age-old question. Most people would admit to struggling to find meaning in their lives at some point. Many people live their entire lives unable to answer this question. Thankfully, Christians have the answer. The meaning of life is to know God and enjoy Him, becoming more and more like His Son in the process. This process is called sanctification: living lives of progressive holiness.

- **What do you think most people would say is the meaning of life? Why do you think they would respond that way?**
- **Do you ever struggle to find meaning and purpose in life?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have someone in your group read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

The biggest question in life is what you will do with Jesus. The answer to this question impacts how we live each day. Paul included some practical advice in this letter to the church at Thessalonica that applies to Christ followers of every generation. Even though these believers had experienced tremendous growth, they weren't done growing, and neither are we. We all need to be intentional about pursuing Christ like living.

- **Why does the question of how to live out your faith need to be addressed biblically?**

Stressing that these instructions or commands were not from himself but from the Lord Jesus, Paul described God's will for believers. Sanctification is the process by which we progressively become more like Jesus. The culture of that day was full of sexual immorality, much like our day and time, and Paul stated that believers should live differently from the world. Christians are to steward our bodies in a way that honors God and avoids any implication of sexual immorality—anything outside of God's design for sex in the context of marriage between one man and one woman.

- **How does sexual impurity affect our bodies and our souls?**
- **How is the way a person handles his or her body foundational to other aspects of life?**

- **What does this command challenge you about in your own life?**

Paul made clear that God will punish the sin of sexual immorality, even if it remains undiscovered by other people. Sin has consequences and sexual immorality is sin. We are called to holiness and sexual impurity is not consistent with who we are in Christ as children of God. Not only does sexual immorality follow the ways of the world, but it also makes idols of our bodies and makes temporal pleasure our supreme priority.

- **Why is it impossible to live in ongoing sexual impurity and live holy to God?**

> Have someone in your group read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12.

Paul affirmed the love that he had observed in the church at Thessalonica. While commending them for this love, Paul also encouraged them to keep growing in that brotherly love. This is another reminder that none of us have “arrived” on our spiritual journey and always have room to grow closer to Jesus.

- **How is our spiritual maturity reflected in the ordinary ways we live?**
 - **Paul could see the love of Jesus clearly in this church. Could the same be said about your life and our church?**
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The admonition to lead a quiet life is not about literal noise but more about a life that is characterized by peace, calm, rest, and satisfaction in Jesus. This results in a life of contentment and a desire to continually serve and honor God. In other words, we stay focused on God's call and aren't distracted by worldly pursuits or whatever the culture of the day is promoting for the "good life."

- **How does this teaching of Paul apply in our day?**

Paul assured the Thessalonians, and us, that when we obey God's call of ordinary faithfulness, we will walk properly toward those who are outside. The goal is for others to see our lives with Jesus and want the faith we have for themselves. As we live in this way, we will lack nothing in Christ and steadily continue toward spiritual maturity.

- **Who have you been given influence with to show what it looks like to follow Jesus each day?**
- **What is your primary takeaway from today's study?**

APPLICATION

- **How have you been personally challenged by this passage's call to holiness? What specific sin do you need to confess and repent from in order to pursue holiness?**
- **How do our lives reflect Jesus to others? Where do we need to grow?**

PRAY

Thank the Lord for the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower you for godly living. Ask for wisdom and courage to surrender to Him and make choices daily to reflect Jesus to others.

INTRODUCTION TO 1 THESSALONIANS

Paul spent a very short time in the city of Thessalonica, but he was able to establish a church during his stay. He may have had little time to instruct the new converts, so it is not surprising that Paul wrote a letter to address some questions.

Author

No serious objections have been made to dispute that Paul was the author of 1 Thessalonians (1:1). The greeting also mentions Silvanus and Timothy. Sometimes Paul wrote from the team perspective, but he was the primary author (2:18; 3:2).

Background

About AD 50 the missionary team led by Paul and Silas (“Silvanus”) left Philippi and traveled westward on the Roman road known as the Via Egnatia. They proceeded toward Thessalonica—the strategic capital city of the Roman Province of Macedonia. Thessalonica was a large port city on the Aegean Sea in modern-day Greece, with a population of about two hundred thousand. The city was filled with pagan worshipers of idols, the full pantheon of Greek and Roman gods, and was well known for its emperor worship. Thessalonica was loyal to Caesar, who had granted its citizens many privileges.

Message and Purpose

Timothy reported to Paul that although the church at Thessalonica was suffering affliction, they were holding fast to the faith. And though they had some doctrinal misunderstandings, they were laboring for the Lord out of love and patiently hoping for the return of Christ. Paul wrote to encourage the church in their faith, to remind them that sanctification was God’s will for them, and to correct misunderstandings about end-time events.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

4:1–2 These verses do not express a degree of dissatisfaction with the Thessalonians. Rather they emphasize the progressive nature of the Christian life.

Notes:

4:3 Sanctification refers to the consecration of the believer to God in holy and proper behavior in regard to sexual purity. God's will is clear—to keep away from sexual immorality. The passage does not say to abstain from sex practiced in the context of marriage but from sex that deviates from God's standards. This includes premarital sex, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, and adultery.

4:4–5 The phrase control his own body probably refers to the idea of controlling the body's lustful sexual desires that might lead a Christian to sin. An alternate but less likely view is that it refers to obtaining a wife.

4:6–8 When a person commits a sexual sin, the result is to transgress against and take advantage of one's brother or sister—that is, fellow Christian. A sexual transgression defrauds one's brother in the sense that sexual sin is a form of theft: you take something that does not belong to you. It defrauds both the partner of the illicit relationship as well as a spouse or future spouse who alone has rights in sexual matters. In this manner points back to the discussion of sexual purity in vv. 3–5. Paul gave two reasons for Christians to abstain from sexual immorality. First is that the Lord is an avenger who will judge the offense. Second is that sexual impurity violates God's call to live in holiness. The implication of God's giving us His Holy Spirit is that a person should not mix human sexual impurity with God's holy nature in the Holy Spirit, who dwells within the Christian (1Co 6:19).

4:9–12. The reference to brotherly love (Gk philadelphia) seems to govern the content of these verses in encouraging fellow Christians to lead a quiet life, mind one's own business, and work with one's hands. To do otherwise places a burden of dependence on the community of faith and gives a poor testimony to outsiders (5:14; 2Th 3:7–12). Paul demonstrated this work ethic by providing for his own needs (1Th 2:9).