

Week 5

Day 1

Read **1 Thessalonians 4:1-12** below three times and then follow the instructions that follow:

Additionally then, brothers and sisters, we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received instruction from us on how you should live and please God—as you are doing—do this even more. For you know what commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you keep away from sexual immorality, that each of you knows how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passions, like the Gentiles, who don't know God. This means one must not transgress against and take advantage of a brother or sister in this manner, because the Lord is an avenger of all these offenses, as we also previously told and warned you. For God has not called us to impurity but to live in holiness. Consequently, anyone who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

About brotherly love: You don't need me to write you because you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. In fact, you are doing this toward all the brothers and sisters in the entire region of Macedonia. But we encourage you, brothers and sisters, to do this even more, to seek to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, so that you may behave properly in the presence of outsiders and not be dependent on anyone.

1. Circle any words that seem important to you in this passage.
2. Put squares around the verbs (action words) in this passage.
3. Write down three questions that you have after reading this passage:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
4. What encourages you from this passage?
5. What challenges you from this passage?
6. What would you say is the main idea of this passage?
7. Choose a verse or group of verses that you will memorize this week. Write that verse or those verses below:

Day 2

1. How do you determine what is right and what is wrong?
2. What factors are involved in you making decisions about the way you live?

The question of right and wrong is often described as a question dealing with ethics. The word *ethics* means a custom or usage or practice prescribed by law. In the New Testament, the concept of ethics refers to a manner of life or a pattern of conduct within the Christian faith that produces goodness, purity, and holiness.

To put it in terms that Paul uses in 1 Thessalonians 4, we are called to “walk” in a manner that pleases God. Paul uses this metaphor of walking over thirty-two times in his letters to describe the Christian life. We are on a journey, and as we travel along, we are called by God to walk a certain way, which means we are to live in a way that is consistent with the Word of God.

Read **1 Thessalonians 4:1-2**.

First Thessalonians 4:1 marks a major turning point in the letter. The apostle had already described what kind of pattern the Thessalonians should follow (2:1–12). Now he turns to direct exhortation: *do this, don't do that*.

In verse 1 Paul does three things:

- (1) He reminds the Thessalonians of the instructions they had received from him during his time in Thessalonica.
- (2) He affirms and commends them for following those instructions.

(3) He exhorts them "to do this more and more."

It appears that he is affirming that they have done well, while making it clear that there is much more to do. He asking them first to commit to know what God's Word says. Secondly, he asking them to commit to do what God tells them to do. Knowing what to do is one thing, doing it is another. Paul is telling the Thessalonians that their obedience to Christ will spill over into every area of their lives.

3. What area of your life is the most difficult for you to know exactly what God is calling you to do?

4. What area of your life is the most difficult for your to obey what God wants you to do? Why?

Read **2 Timothy 2:3-7**.

In this passage, Paul gives Timothy the same challenge as he gives to the Thessalonians. He uses three analogies to help Timothy (and us) understand the level of commitment that is required for following Jesus.

5. How would you describe how each of the three analogies helps us to understand what is required to follow Jesus?

6. Which of the three analogies challenges you the most?

7. Write down one truth you learned today.

Day 3

David Platt has said that if a Christian from another era were to be suddenly transported to our time period, they would be shocked with how comfortable we are with materialism and the rampant sexuality of our culture.

1. Do you agree? Why or Why not?

2. How would you define sexual immorality?

Arguably one of Satan's most effective methods for destroying lives and ruining relationships is sexual sin. This world is sex-saturated. Every day we are exposed to a mixture of images, music, and innuendo that make up the sexual culture. In his excellent book, *Finally Free*, Heath Lambert details the destructive nature of our sexual culture. In particular, Lambert details the destruction that pornography brings to those caught in its traps. He says, "Pornography has now chewed them up and spit them out. At the beginning of the journey, watching people commit acts of sexual immorality seemed fun, intriguing, comforting, and exhilarating. Now, the sin has bitten back hard. Their hearts are weighed down with guilt, their relationships are strained, their view of sex is corrupted, and their Christian witness is marred."

Read **1 Thessalonians 4:3-8**.

3. What significance should be understood that Paul starts the ethical section of his letter with a discussion of sexuality?

The culture of the Thessalonica was also saturated with sexuality. The people who lived in the city were part of a culture that viewed sex as just another biological function - an instinct that needed to be satisfied. In the same way that people satisfied their hunger with food and thirst with drink, people in Thessalonica felt that they should be able to fill their sexual desire at any time. In fact, many of the religions in and around Thessalonica had prostitutes in their temples as part of their worship rituals.

With that background in mind, Paul begins his commands with the subject of sexual purity. His command is simple and direct: "Abstain from sexual immorality." No excuses - no "what ifs" - simply stay away from it. Paul has been preparing them for this. He applauded their love of God and His truth. Now he says, it is time to take your commitment to another level.

Read **Acts 15:1-29**.

Acts 15 tells the story of the debate over what would be required for Gentiles to become followers of Jesus. Focus today on the instructions to the churches after the decision was made in vs. 22-29. Only four specific items are listed as things from which these believers should abstain.

Read **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**.

4. What is the basis of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 6 for abstinence from sexual immorality?

5. Why is Paul so adamant about abstaining from sexual immorality?

6. Write down one truth you learned today.

Day 4

What evidence is there in your life that you are a follower of Jesus Christ?

What evidence should there be in your life that you are a follower of Jesus Christ?

Read **John 13:35**

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

1. What does Jesus say is the criteria for the world to determine if we are followers of Him?

Jesus did not say that the world will know we are his disciples by our correct doctrine. He did not say that the world will know we are his disciples by the power of our words. He said that the world will know we are his disciples because of our love for one another. Love is a powerful testimony to the reality of the Christian faith. In the third century Tertullian once reported that the Romans would say about the Christians, “See how they love one another.” Justin Martyr explained Christian love this way:

We who used to value the acquisition of wealth and possessions more than any- thing else now bring what we have into a common fund and share it with any- one who needs it. We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies.

Christianity spread rapidly through the Roman world because of this love.

2. How would you describe what it means to love one another?

Read **1 Thessalonians 4:9-12**.

Paul now gets very practical about what brotherly love should look like. Paul told us to love one another and to live well with one another. Now he tells us what that looks like. Paul gives us three admonitions, three commands that we are called to obey:

- Live a quiet life.
- Mind your own affairs.
- Work with your own hands.

3. Write out your definition of each command beside that command above. How do these three commands relate to loving one another?

4. Circle the command above that is easiest for you to obey. Why is that command the easiest for you to obey?

5. Put a box around the command above that is hardest for you to obey. Why is that command the hardest for you to obey?

6. How are you specifically challenged by these commands?

7. Write down one truth you learned today.

Day 5

Read **1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**.

At the end of this passage, Paul reveals the reason for the commands about holiness, sexual purity, love, and work. As he wraps up this section on the ways we are to walk obediently in following the Lord, he wants to remind us of our calling in lives as followers of Jesus Christ. He also wants to remind the Thessalonians to live in the freedom they have been granted in Christ.

1. List the two reasons stated in 1 Thessalonians 4:12 that Paul gives for these commands:

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Paul sums up this entire passage by stating why his instruction is so important. Whatever you do, he admonished, be careful to “walk properly in the presence of outsiders and not be dependent on anyone” (1 Thessalonians 4:12). In this verse Paul makes two significant statements: God never intended for the church to be isolated from the world, and God never intended for His church to be dependent on the world.

2. How do these two purposes work together with one another?

God established His church to be more than buildings dotting the landscapes of towns all over the world. God never intended for His church to be defined by or confined by a building. Originally, the followers of Jesus were identified as a movement. They were called followers of the Way.

Read **1 Peter 2:9, 12.**

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.

The imagery in 1 Peter is meant to remind the readers of the Old Testament understanding of God's people as a light unto the nations. When God called Abraham in Gen. 12, He promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation - a nation through which every nation on earth would be blessed. Throughout the Old Testament, God continually reminded the people they were not just to a reservoir of God's blessings. Instead, they were to be the conduit through which the blessings of God would flow to the nations of the world.

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul is telling the church that our purpose is the same. We are to be the ambassadors of God to the people around us. He is making the point that the message that we preach and the life that we live are inseparable. We should ask God to make us sensitive to how we live in the presence of people who are not followers of Jesus. Our lives are the platform from which we proclaim the Gospel. Genuine love for one another and a diligent work ethic will create open doors for us to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people in our spheres of influence.

Based on the study for this week, answer the following questions:

1. What is required of a person who desires to live and please God?
2. What should be our motivation for keeping the commands of God?
3. How can you tell that members of a church genuinely love one another?
4. How can you tell when love is absent from a church? What are the results?
5. Give some examples from this passage of how Paul connects the faith of the Christian with the life of a Christian?
6. Read James 2:14-26. How does Paul's emphasis on application in 1 Thessalonians relate to the passage in James?
7. What does it mean to live a quiet life? How does this apply to your life and work?
8. Give some specific examples of how Christians can work with their hands in such a way that their work points to Christ.
9. What are some practical ways you can apply Paul's teachings from this week to your work, school, or home life?