



WEEK V

I THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

DAY 1 - MONDAY

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Ezekiel 36:26-27, 1 Peter 1:15-23

REFLECTION: Take a moment to think about what it means to “please God”. What does the truth that we bring pleasure to our Maker’s heart—imply about who God is and what He is like?

LIVING TO PLEASE GOD

Paul makes holiness abundantly practical. In today’s passage he tells us that God’s will for our lives is that we are sanctified, which means “made holy.” He then unpacks what it means to “live in holiness,” explaining what it consists of in a practical way. It’s keeping away from sex outside the context of marriage, exercising self-control, loving your brother and sister in the Lord, minding your own business, working hard and well, and behaving as decent citizens in your communities (1Thessalonians 4:3-7).

In many ways the mystery of holiness is not all that mysterious. It’s readily practical and down to earth. Holiness isn’t something that is outside our grasp after all. God intends for us to be holy in our everyday lives—here and now. That is His will for us. That is what He has called us to (v.7).

The challenge Paul brings to the Thessalonians, and to us, is simply to keep pursuing this holiness. The practical outworkings of holiness are the simple things of everyday life. The question is, do we believe God’s Word for us more than we love our own way of living? Do we believe His way is better? Will we walk in the day-to-day holiness He has for us?

Unlike string theory, holiness is not a complex, overwhelming mystery. It’s being faithful to your wife. Being vigilant against lust and sexual temptations. It’s keeping your word, loving your neighbor, and living an ordinary life that has been changed by God’s extraordinary grace. That’s the holiness we’re called to. We won’t be perfect. Thank God for His grace. But we are called to live in the holiness we’re given in Christ. And a big part of living in holiness is learning to walk in it.

By Jeremy Writebol - *He Reads Truth 1 & 2 Thessalonians Reading Plan*

DAY 2 - TUESDAY

I 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Hebrews 12:14, Acts 26:17-18

REFLECTION: What is something that culture says is okay that as a Christian you know is not? Why is it tempting to follow the culture's values?

How do you think you could begin to live set apart today?

SET APART

When Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians, Roman culture was marked by a lack of sexual purity. In the Roman empire, the motto for sex was "anything goes." As commentator David Guzik points out, "...chastity and sexual purity were almost unknown virtues." Simply put, Roman culture said and did one thing, but Christians were called to another standard.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians what that standard is, holiness (v.3). As Christians, we are called to a standard different from that of the culture around us. The standard God puts before us is holiness, which means living differently, living set apart. Paul writes to the Thessalonians that "God's will is for you to be holy." (v. 4:3). Some translations use the word sanctification instead of holy. Sanctification, like holiness, means to be set apart. Tyndale commentator Leon Morris explains their differences this way, "Your sanctification points to the process of which 'holiness' is the completed state." In other words, living sanctified means setting ourselves apart from the standards or expectations of our culture and aligning ourselves with the standards of our God.

The pursuit of holiness happens in our small daily decisions to live set apart. That's why our thoughts, actions, and words matter. God is interested in every part of who we are and what we do. Learning who God is, meditating daily on what He has done for us and submitting our daily decisions to His authority will help us to lead lives that are set apart.

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, Romans 5:5-8, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:1-9

REFLECTION: What could it look like for us to show care and concern for others in a way that makes those who aren't Christians begin to take notice?

A LOVING EXAMPLE

God gives us examples of how to love one another through the teachings of Jesus (John 13:34-35), the cross (Romans 5:6-8, Ephesians 5:1-2), and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5, Galatians 5:22-23).

In verse 12 of 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul reminds them that showing this kind of generous love will lead those who are not Christians to respect the way they live. It is obvious from Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 that the Thessalonians showed love in many ways including, providing economic aid to those throughout the province. This kind of care and concern makes people notice and want to know more about those who show love in this countercultural way. Generosity and grace warm the heart. When people see overwhelming generosity, they want to know what motivates such kindness.

In his book, *Contagious Christianity*, Charles Swindoll mentions three observations based on Paul's advice to keep in mind about our example to non-believers:

- They are watching and wondering, so conduct yourself with wisdom.
- They are listening and learning, so speak your words with grace.
- They are individuals and important, so respond with dignity and sensitivity.

When we take these practical steps to show others love, kindness, and grace in these ways, it opens the door to relationships and opportunities to share the gospel and what Jesus means to us with them.

In his book on 1 & 2 Thessalonians, N.T. Wright explains what we can learn from early Christians:

The first Christians, in Jerusalem, sold their property, pooled their resources and shared the money thus gained among themselves (see Acts 2:44-45). This was not simply, as is sometimes said, because they expected the return of Jesus and the end of the world very soon. It was more because the early Christians saw themselves as members of a family, and families in the ancient world shared all things in common, often a business as well as a home, helping each other financially as need arose. Outsiders, looking at a movement that made striking claims about Jesus as Lord of the world, would be interested to see what effect it had on the behavior of the members. They would have seen the Thessalonians living a life of practical love, taking care of one another financially and extending their outreach to the other churches of Macedonia.

DAY 4 - THURSDAY

I 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, Matthew 22:34-40, John 15:13, Colossians 4:5-6

REFLECTION: How do you think the Holy Spirit teaches us to love?

How can you lean on the Holy Spirit to allow His love to overflow in you today?

OVERFLOWING LOVE

"Love them even more..." One of the things that is unmistakable throughout Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is his genuine love and care for them. Paul's overflowing warmth and love is one of the most appealing parts of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, Paul points out that he is proud of the Thessalonians for showing brotherly love to those in Macedonia, but he calls them to more.

He calls them to love the people of Macedonia even more than they currently are. Why? Because the true mark of a Christian is one whose love is overflowing. We shouldn't just care about love as a way of being kind and accepting to the world around us, but a love so radical that it draws the attention of the world around us. We should be people marked by a love so warm, so different, so powerful that others begin to ask: why do you care so much for me? Simply, we are called to the same kind of overflowing love that Paul has for the Thessalonians.

How do we do this though? How do we become people that not only love, but overflow in our love for others? It's not easy. It's hard enough to simply show warmth and kindness to certain people, but the first thing we need to be reminded of is that everyone is loved by God. When we begin to reflect on that daily, we can begin to see people differently. We begin to see people through the lens that Christ sees them.

Secondly, we need to treat people with the love of Christ. Again, this isn't easy. It's a lifelong pursuit that we can begin today. It requires things like patience, understanding, empathy, humility just to name a few. Here's the thing: the most powerful tool we have to point others to Jesus is an overflowing love. A love that is overflowing is attractive. It brings with it the question of "why do you love me?" and "what compels you to live like that?" These questions bring about the possibility of gospel conversations because the answer to those questions can only be found in a life committed to Jesus.

We are called to an overflowing love, and the mark of the Christian is our ability and willingness to allow the Holy Spirit's love within us to overflow into everything we do. This kind of overflowing love is an awareness of the value of God's people and a genuine care for them. When we show a love like this, we live a life in the overflowing love Christ has for you and me.

DAY 5 - FRIDAY

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13, 21:25, Ephesians 4:28

REFLECTION: What does it look like to live a quiet life working with your hands? Why is it important to work diligently at something in order to be able to provide?

THE VALUE OF HARD WORK

When Paul first visited Thessalonica, he taught the believers to work for a living rather than being unnecessarily dependent on others. Yet some of the Thessalonians still refused to work. Possibly, these believers so vividly expected a quick return of the Lord that they gave up all work and were just waiting on the Lord's return. Another possibility is these idle Christians may have been clients of prominent wealthy patrons. In the Roman economic system, these wealthy patrons increased their honor by having numerous clients, but this also left those clients obligated to obey or be indebted to the wealthy patrons who were often non-Christians. Christian living is more than simply loving other Christians. We must aim to be responsible in all areas of life. Some of the Thessalonians had adopted a life of idleness, depending on others to survive. Paul's urge to the Thessalonians is whatever you do, do it faithfully and be a positive force in society. This is why he urges them to live quiet lives instead of meddling in others' affairs. He also urges them to work with their hands so as to not have to be dependent on anyone else for their income.

God created Adam and Eve and put them in the Garden to tend it, not just to sit back and enjoy it. Work is not a result of the Fall, but rather it is a dignified and important part of creation. The book of Proverbs frequently talks of laziness, even equating lazy people with the foolish. In contrast, diligent people are seen as wise. While ultimate meaning and fulfillment do not come from hard work and our hard work can't lead us to forget God's ability to provide, we have no excuse to be lazy. God designed us to use our gifts and abilities to be productive and provide for ourselves and for others. As Ephesians 4:28 says, "use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need."

Adapted from the NLT Filament Bible & ESV Study Bible

DAY 6 - SATURDAY

Reflection Day

I 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

REFLECTION QUESTIONS & NOTES:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is one truth you learned this week that you want to share?
- Does your life look set apart to those around you? What would it look like if you began to make choices based on a genuine pursuit of holiness?
- How can you begin to internalize and live out what you read and learned in this week's study?



DAY 7 - SUNDAY

Rest Day

*Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed.
Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.*