

SESSION 5

# daily-walk instructions

## SCRIPTURE FOCUS

1 Thess. 4:1–12

## BUILDUP THEME



INTERNALIZE GODLINESS

God provides both the instructions and the enabling for our daily walk with Him.

## MEASURABLE RESPONSE

The students will evaluate their spiritual growth and consider ways to maintain it.

## MEMORY VERSE

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more" (1 Thess. 4:1).

## Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Regardless of how long you have been a believer, God still wants you to grow spiritually. The Spirit brings growth and development in our lives, but we have certain responsibilities as well. We must put forth the effort to please God daily in order to allow the Spirit's work in our lives. When we aren't making progress, we become stagnant and may soon find ourselves declining.
- ☐ Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12. Paul often commended his audience before giving them instructions. He repeated that pattern in 1 Thessalonians. Paul commended the believers for their example of strong faith and brotherly love. He was pleased with their progress. But there were matters Paul needed to address. He instructed them to walk right, love right, and relate right. His instructions apply to our lives today.
- ☐ Some of the Thessalonians had stopped working to wait for Christ's return. They had stopped making spiritual progress too. Paul told them to get busy moving forward on both fronts. Challenge your students to be moving forward in their Christian walk. When Christ returns, He should find them working for Him.

## Session Summary

Paul urged the Thessalonians to keep growing spiritually. Through the missionaries' teachings, they had received Christ's commands and were doing well, but they needed to consider some practical matters for making spiritual progress. Paul reminded them of God's call to holiness, which required purity. He also urged them to increase the brotherly love they were already practicing and to live quietly, minding their own business and providing for their own needs. With the Holy Spirit's help, the believers could keep walking in the ways of God and learn to please Him more fully.



# Session Starters

## Option 1—Time-Lapse

### Gather

- Time-lapse videos of plant growth.

### Steps

1. Show several time-lapse videos of plants growing. Many videos are available online. Include a variety (e.g., a flower, a vegetable, and a fruit tree). They are fascinating!

2. Discuss the videos and compare plant growth to spiritual growth.

A time-lapse video helps us see growth as a continuing process. It allows us to see motion that is normally too slow to observe.

**ASK:** How is plant growth similar to a believer's spiritual growth?  
*They are both gradual and continual; both should be productive.*

**ASK:** How might we observe spiritual growth in a person's life?  
*Through the increase of godly characteristics and behaviors, the fruit of the Spirit.*

3. Transition to the Bible study.

Just as plant growth is an observable, continual process, spiritual growth should be a continuing process evidenced in our lives. Paul commended the Thessalonians for evidence of their spiritual growth but also addressed issues God wanted them to correct to maintain spiritual progress. This session will help us consider our own spiritual walk and ways to keep growing in our faith.

## Option 2—Learning to Walk

### Gather

- Video of a child or grandchild learning to walk or a compilation video from the web.

### Steps

1. Show a personal video of your child or grandchild learning to walk, share your experience with helping a child learn to walk, or show a video from the web. Allow students to add their stories.

2. Discuss the process of learning to walk.

**ASK:** What tricks or techniques have you used to encourage a child to learn to walk? (Q1)

**ASK:** Why didn't you quit in the process of helping the child walk? (Q2)

### 3. Transition to the Bible study.

Learning to walk takes time, encouragement, and a lot of falls. We could say the same about learning to walk spiritually. If a believer does get up and try, it won't happen. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to encourage them to make progress in their spiritual walks. His instructions are helpful for us too.

## Bible Study

Paul had commended the Thessalonian believers for their strong faith. He had responded to Timothy's good report with comfort, joy, and continued prayer for the new converts. Next, Paul turned to practical matters. He addressed specific issues to ensure the Thessalonians continued on the path of spiritual progress.

### I. Walk Right (1 Thess. 4:1, 2)

#### A. Walking instructions (4:1)

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:1.

Paul's team taught the Thessalonians how to walk (live) pleasing to God. The believers had been following their teachings, but Paul urged them to be even more diligent in putting the Lord first in their daily lives. He did not issue a command, as he sometimes did in his letters. Instead, he made a sincere request, strongly encouraging them in Jesus' name to follow what he had taught them. As believers, they were to reflect "more and more" that they lived for Christ. What they did, said, and even thought was to be what Christ would do, say, and think.

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians were his formal walking instructions for the church. The letters added to what he had taught them in person.

First and Second Thessalonians and the rest of the New Testament epistles form the primary instructions for churches and believers today. The Bible as a whole provides all we need to know about walking to please God.

We must take God's instructions for life seriously. That is why this course and other Strong Adults courses are based on Bible books and passages. The Bible is our sufficient and effective guide for walking to please God.

**ASK:** How can we be sure we are walking to please God? (Q3) *We must study books like 1 and 2 Thessalonians; we must depend on*

*the Holy Spirit for guidance in applying God's Word and for strength in living it out.*

## **B. Walking instructor (4:2)**

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:2.

The Thessalonians were eager to live for Christ, so they were sure to remember the commandments Paul gave them. They also realized that Paul spoke as an apostle under Christ's authority. When Paul taught the Thessalonians, it was as if Jesus was teaching them. Jesus guided Paul's thoughts and words. And when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, the Holy Spirit worked in him so that every word he used came from God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Pastors and teachers in churches today must be careful to study God's Word so they can explain its meaning and challenge believers to follow its instructions. Church members must hold their pastors and teachers accountable for preaching and teaching what the Bible says (Acts 17:10–12). Paul understood the importance of being held accountable. He told the Galatians that they should reject him if he preached a gospel of his own making (Gal. 1:8–12).

**ASK:** When our pastor preaches God's Word, we should receive his message as from the Lord. How could we make sure we do that?  
(Q4) *We can prepare our hearts ahead of time to receive the Lord's message for us; we can pay attention and take notes; we can talk to the Lord about the message after the fact.*

Each of us has the responsibility to learn and follow Christ's instructions in the Bible. Spiritual leaders may teach, guide, and encourage us, but no one can make us grow spiritually. All believers must decide to pursue personal spiritual progress. We are, however, not left alone in learning how to walk like Christ. The Holy Spirit is in us to help us. Paul makes that point clear a little later in his letter.

## **II. Love Right (1 Thess. 4:3–8)**

Paul spent the next several verses on how believers can follow God's instructions for life in specific ways. He talked first about personal relationships between a man and a woman.

### **A. Sanctified relationships (4:3–6)**

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

Paul began his instructions on relationships by stating that the believer's sanctification is God's will. To be sanctified means to become holy or set apart for God's use. Simply put, sanctified believers will sin less and obey God more as they learn to love God with all their hearts. They will serve God more and serve self less over the course of their lifetimes.

"Concupiscence" (1 Thess. 4:5) in the KJV means strong desire.

The Thessalonian believers were saved out of a paganism, meaning they had a sinful and selfish understanding of relationships. They used each other to manipulate their gods and to fulfill their lusts. God required them to take no part in the immorality that characterized the pagan religious rituals and way of life. As they honored God with their relationships, they would become more sanctified or set apart for His use.

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:4.

Paul's language in verse 4 is a bit unclear for us today. Some interpreters think he is referring to how a husband treats his wife. Others believe he is referring to how believers use their own bodies. Either way, holiness and honor should be the goal of believers' physical relationships. A married couple should honor each other and God.

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:5.

Honorable physical relationships are not driven by lust. A lustful person will use people selfishly without regard for the person's needs. The pagan Gentiles were driven by lust. They didn't know God's character and ways and had no frame of reference for building holy, pure relationships.

**ASK:** Which of God's characteristics or attributes provide guidelines for a husband and wife? (Q5) *God's holiness, kindness, honesty, patience, and love.*

**ASK:** What does Christ teach us about God-honoring love? (Q6) *That it is sacrificial, generous, and sincere.*

Paul taught in Ephesians that Christ's love for the church is the model for a husband's love for his wife. Christ gave His life for the church when He died on the cross (Eph. 5:25). Relationships that focus on using the other person for personal fulfillment, even within a marriage, don't honor God.

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:6.

The Thessalonian believers were living as Christ's witnesses in Thessalonica. If they had lustful, selfish relationships like their pagan neighbors, then they would ruin their testimony and witness. But a sanctified relationship would support their gospel message.

Paul reminded the Thessalonians that God will judge the lost for misusing each other. God will ultimately condemn the lost to eternity in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:15), so there was a lot at stake. Believers need to live sanctified lives so the lost will recognize their own sin and their need for a Savior.

## **B. Spiritual relationships (4:7, 8)**

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:7.

God commands the believer to be holy (1 Pet. 1:16). So, holiness isn't just God's preference or desire, it is His expectation for all believers. If the Thessalonian believers continued in impure, unclean relationships, then they would be disobeying God's command.

There was nothing complicated about Paul's straightforward teaching. It was plain and to the point. But putting it into practice wasn't so easy. Paul pointed the Thessalonians to their Helper in putting God's call to sanctified relationships into practice.

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:8. **ASK:** Why might a believer reject God's call to a sanctified relationship? (Q7) *The believer doesn't want to stop sinning; the believer thinks having a sanctified relationship is impossible.*

The Holy Spirit is the believer's helper in carrying out God's will. The Spirit lives in all believers and enables them to reject sin and rebellion against God's ways. He also changes their desires so they want to please and obey God.

The Spirit works in our hearts as we study and learn God's Word. He uses God's Word to help us say no to sin and yes to obeying God.

**ASK:** God calls us to holiness in all matters. What conflicting messages does the world give? (Q8) *You only live once, so get all you can out of life; follow your heart; work as hard as you can to get as much as you can.*

### **III. Relate Right (1 Thess. 4:9–12)**

Paul addressed other general relationships in which the Thessalonians needed to make spiritual progress.

#### **A. Growing relationships (4:9, 10)**

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:9. **ASK:** How does God teach us? (Q9) *He speaks to us through His Word; the Spirit influences us as we listen for His voice; He impresses thoughts and feelings in our hearts and minds; He works through our conscience.*

As Paul had noted earlier, the Thessalonians' love for others was obvious (1:3; 3:6). He knew from Timothy's report that they were already beginning to follow the Lord's teaching on this matter. The Thessalonians had yielded themselves to God's will, so they were being taught by God to love one another. God's love had replaced selfish, destructive love in their hearts, and they were demonstrating God's love to all the believers in Macedonia.

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:10. **ASK:** What does brotherly love look like in believers' lives? (Q10) *They will forgive readily, offer support and encouragement, care for others' needs, put others before themselves.*

Although Paul commended the believers in their exemplary love toward each other, he urged them to grow in their love, to express it even more and with even greater purity and sincerity. This command reflected Paul's earlier prayer that the Lord would make them increase their love for each other (3:12).

Allowing God to increase our love for fellow believers, and for unbelievers, contributes to our spiritual growth as we move ahead in our Christian walk. As our love for Christ grows, His Spirit will increase our love for others.

## **B. Giving relationships (4:11, 12)**

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

Some of the Thessalonians believed Christ was returning soon, so they stopped working and were allowing wealthier believers to support them. Their idleness led them to meddle in others' affairs. Paul gave these believers specific guidance for further spiritual growth.

First, Paul urged them to pursue a quiet, restful life, not disturbing others or causing problems among their neighbors. Second, he commanded them to mind their own business; living in peace with others requires not interfering in their matters. Finally, the believers were to stay busy by working diligently to earn a living for themselves rather than expecting others to feed them. As they earned a living, they would free up money for believers who had true needs, and they would have money to give to the needy themselves (Eph. 4:28).

Some of the Thessalonians focused too much on Christ's return and stopped living for the Lord. Believers today tend to not think enough about Christ's return. We should live everyday as if Christ were returning that day.

**ASK:** How often do you think of Christ's return? How has His any-moment return affected your life? (Q11)

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:12.

As the believers worked and gave to the truly needy, they would present a good testimony to those outside the church. Their current practice of idleness and becoming burdensome to others left a negative impression on unbelievers.

There is no question of Christ's return. He will come back and at any moment. But the Thessalonians didn't know when, so they needed to live a normal, productive life for Christ as they waited. "Make the most of your time," Paul said, "and keep working for the Lord. Keep growing in your faith."

**ASK:** Suppose Christ was returning tomorrow. What would you do today to get ready to meet Him? (Q12)



# Session Application

## Steps

1. Challenge your students to evaluate their spiritual growth.

**ASK:** How might we measure spiritual growth? (Q13) *By evaluating our efforts to please God; by consistently searching our hearts and comparing our attitudes to the teachings we find in God's Word; by examining our lives for spiritual fruit.*

2. Encourage your students to be actively growing.

**ASK:** What practices need to be consistent in our lives for us to progress spiritually? (Q14) *Attending church, individual and group Bible study, prayer, Christian fellowship, service to others.*

**ASK:** How might neglecting any of these practices affect your spiritual growth? (Q15)

**ASK:** What opportunities for learning and growth are available in our church? (Q16)

## SESSION 6

# for-certain hope

### SCRIPTURE FOCUS

1 Thess. 4:13–18

### BUILDUP THEME



LEARN DOCTRINE

God wants us to anticipate Christ's return to resurrect dead believers and rapture living believers.

### MEASURABLE RESPONSE

Students will understand how the promise of Christ's return can affect their lives.

### MEMORY VERSE

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

## Teacher Preparation

- According to the Pew Research Center, about 17% of Americans do not believe in the afterlife and 39% of US adults believe people who don't believe in God can enter Heaven. Misunderstandings about the Rapture, resurrection, and the afterlife are nothing new.
- Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. The Thessalonians were worried about fellow believers who had died before Jesus' return. As Paul clarified the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and the Rapture, he expressed the hope of Heaven, a promise for all believers.
- Some of your students may have doubts, fears, or wrong ideas about what will happen at death or at Christ's return for His church. Use this session to help your students understand the doctrines of the resurrection and the Rapture. Be mindful of any students who have lost a close friend or relative recently. This session can help those who are grieving as well as those who fear death. If you have students who need to trust in Christ for salvation, use this session to present the believer's hope. Emphasize the believer's assurance of salvation and eternal life.

## Session Summary

The Thessalonians were grieving over fellow believers who had died. But the believers could have hope during their grieving because of Jesus' death and resurrection. Paul offered them comfort by teaching them about the resurrection of believers and Christ's return. First, Christ will return from Heaven with believers who have died. Those believers will receive their resurrected, glorified bodies. Christ will then rapture living believers to meet Him and the newly resurrected believers in the air. All believers will be with Christ forever. Believers are responsible to comfort each other with the truths concerning Christ's return.