

Adult School of Ministry
Summer 2025
Lesson 10 – August 3, 2025

Commit to Holiness and Integrity

Holiness is reflected as we live with Christlike integrity.

Scriptures: (1) 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2; 5:15-22; (2) 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8;
(3) 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

The Lesson Overview: We should live to please God. A life that pleases God is committed to holiness and love of fellow Christians. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul wrote to the newly established church in Thessalonica, instructing them to align their lives with God's will, which was for their sanctification and continued growth in love for one another. The key to pleasing God and leading a holy life is love for God and others, especially for one's brothers and sisters in Christ. Love for one another is attractive to people outside the body of Christ and a witness that we are genuine disciples of Jesus Christ (see John 13:35).

Historical Background: New Testament letters were often written for a specific reason to an audience with unique challenges. Sometimes, the writer of the letter identifies these challenges, which provides clarity for the reader, but at times, the specific challenges and situations must be discerned from the text. In 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, the historical situation in Thessalonica should be considered to understand the concerns Paul was addressing. He wrote this section of the letter to address a particular problem in the church, but Paul's responses to unique issues also provide timeless truths and principles for all generations.

Lesson Outline

1. LIVE TO PLEASE GOD - 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2; 5:15-22
 - A. Exhortation To Please God (4:1-2)
 - B. How To Please God More and More (5:15-22)
2. ABSTAIN FROM SIN - 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
 - A. God's Will: Your Sanctification (3-6)
 - B. God's Call: Holiness (7-8)
3. LOVINGLY INFLUENCE OTHERS - 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12
 - A. Abound in Love to One Another (9-10)
 - B. Love One Another by Working (11-12)

Discussing The Lesson

1. LIVE TO PLEASE GOD (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2; 5:15-22)
 - A. Exhortation To Please God - 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2
 - 1) In chapter 3, Paul prayed for the Christians at Thessalonica to increase their love for God and others (v. 12) and for them one day to stand before the Lord “*unblameable in holiness*” (v. 13).
 - 2) What kind of life would prepare them to do this?
 - a. Paul explains in chapter 4, where he encouraged the believers in Christ to continue “*to walk and to please God*” as they had been taught by Paul and his companions on their first visit to them (v. 1).
 - b. When saying “*how ye ought to walk*,” he was saying, “This is how you should live.”
 - 3) Living in a manner that pleases God is not optional; it is a necessary part of being a follower of Christ.
 - 4) Paul’s appeal for them to continue in their faith was to be done “*through the Lord Jesus*” (v. 2 NKJV).
 - 5) Paul reminded them they served Jesus Christ, and what Paul had presented to them was consistent with Christ’s teaching.
 - 6) Paul’s encouragement to the Thessalonian church included the plea for them to “*abound more and more*” in a Christian life that pleased God (v. 1).
 - 7) They were off to a good start, but Paul knew if they were to enter God’s “*kingdom and glory*,” they would need to continue to walk in holiness (2:12).
 - 8) Paul encouraged the young church by telling them they were doing well, but then challenged them to persist in this pattern of living.
 - 9) God would be pleased as long as they continued to keep the “*commandments*” of “*the Lord Jesus*” that Paul and his team had taught and would further teach in the remainder of the letter (4:2).
 - B. How To Please God More and More - 1 Thessalonians 5:15-22
 - 1) In these eight verses, Paul penned some of his final instructions in this letter to the church of Thessalonica.
 - 2) In quick succession, he provided a list of imperatives to the Christians there and to us.
 - 3) All of these commands will help the followers of Christ to please God.
 - a. First, we are not to seek revenge in response to evil but respond to evil with good (v. 15).
 - b. Second, when facing opposition (“*evil*”), we are to “*rejoice evermore*” (v. 16).
 - c. Third, we are to “*pray without ceasing*” (v. 17).
 - i. Even in times of peace and contentment, we are dependent on the Lord to supply our needs, so it is always fitting to pray consistently.
 - d. Fourth, no matter what we face, we are to “*give thanks*” to God (v. 18).
 - e. Finally, following these commands is to obey “*the will of God in Christ Jesus*.”
 - 4) After listing these instructions, Paul gave specific instructions regarding Christian worship.
 - 5) When they gathered, the church must “*not quench the Spirit*” (v. 19 NKJV).
 - 6) Related to this is the command to “*despise not prophesyings*” (v. 20).

- 7) How could the church do these things?
 - a. By discerning what the Lord might be saying to them.
 - b. They would do this by testing the validity of every prophetic word given (v. 21; see 1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:29-33).
- 8) The messages that were consistent with the clear teaching of God's Word (see 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 15) and which encouraged the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:3) were to be received and retained by the congregation as Spirit-inspired words: "*Hold fast to that which is good*" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).
- 9) However, any prophetic word that did not align with Scripture, proving to be "*evil*" because it did come from the Lord, was to be rejected (v. 22).

2. ABSTAIN FROM SIN (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

A. God's Will: Your Sanctification - 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6

- 1) The main emphasis in verses 3-6 is God's will for His children, which is our "*sanctification*" (v. 3).
- 2) The term *sanctification*, in the New Testament, has to do with being set apart for God and His purposes, which includes living according to God's standard (a Christian ethic).
- 3) One area of sanctification Paul was particularly concerned with was sexual purity.
- 4) Paul's discussion of sexual purity became more and more specific.
- 5) Broadly, Christians were to "*abstain from fornication*" (v. 3).
- 6) The New Testament Greek term translated in English as *fornication* is *porneia*, which was broadly used to cover any sexual act outside of God's design for sexual intimacy between a man and a woman in marriage.
- 7) Specifying matters further, Paul cautioned that every Christian "*should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor*" (v. 4).
- 8) Considering the symbolic use of the term *vessel* and the proper translation of the Greek term rendered *possess*,
- 9) Paul was saying we must exhibit self-control in the realm of sexual intimacy.
- 10) The following verse affirms this understanding, as Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to show self-restraint in a manner uncommon among "*Gentiles who do not know God*" (v. 5 NKJV).
- 11) In pagan worship, temple prostitution was practiced.
- 12) Therefore, Gentile men saw nothing wrong with engaging in sexual relations in the temple of a pagan god or goddess.
- 13) However, Paul counseled Christians to control their sexual appetites so they would not sin against or exploit their brother or sister in Christ by having sinful relations with them.
- 14) Sexual relations outside of marriage violate God's commandments regarding sexual intimacy (v. 6) and will incur His judgment.
- 15) Holiness dictates that Christians practice sexual purity.

B. God's Call: Holiness - 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8

- 1) Paul continued with the Lord's instructions regarding self-control in the area of sexual relationships.
- 2) In verse 7, Paul picked up on language used in verse 3 ("*sanctification*") to emphasize that God's people are "*called ... unto holiness*" (v. 7).
- 3) God's *call* here refers to salvation, which is an act of divine grace.
- 4) The call of God, though, is not without ethical expectations.

- 5) These expectations are consistent with God's standard for salvation, which does not tolerate "*uncleanness*" but has as its aim "*holiness*" (v. 7).
 - 6) The reason for this was clearly explained earlier in the letter.
 - 7) In 3:13, Paul prayed that his audience would have their hearts established "*unblameable in holiness before God ... at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"
 - 8) This was important to Paul (and God) because without holiness, "*no one will see the Lord*" (Hebrews 12:14).
 - 9) Therefore, being called to holiness would not only keep the Thessalonian Christians free from impurity but would also prepare them to meet the Lord at His second coming and to enter God's eternal kingdom.
 - 10) In case Paul's audience thought these were merely his own personal views or moral code, Paul reminded the Thessalonian church that these instructions, including the call for them to be holy, were from God (1 Thessalonians 4:8).
 - 11) God is further described as the one who continues to give "*His Holy Spirit*" to the Thessalonians.
 - 12) If they ceased to pursue holiness, they would be cutting themselves off from the presence of the living God in their lives.
 - 13) This is because God is holy, and the Spirit He gives to His people is also holy.
 - 14) Therefore, we are to be holy.
 - 15) Thankfully, our growth in holiness is attributed to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit within us.
 - 16) The Spirit's presence and power will empower us to live set-apart lives and grow in holiness, which is a sign of Christian commitment and maturity.
3. LOVINGLY INFLUENCE OTHERS (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12)
- A. Abound in Love to One Another - 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10
- 1) Paul returns to a theme he presented earlier in the letter.
 - 2) In 1:3, he said he was thankful to God for the Thessalonian church's "labor of love" toward the Lord and others.
 - 3) This indicates the church was marked by its love for God and one another.
 - 4) Paul said he did not need to write to them about loving each other because they were already doing it (4:9).
 - 5) The kind of love he mentioned was love between family members.
 - 6) There was evidence that they loved their brothers and sisters in Christ because even believers residing in the region of Macedonia had heard of and experienced their love (v. 10).
 - 7) All Paul had to say regarding their love for other Christians was to continue to do so "more and more."
 - 8) Another reason Paul did not need to write extensively to the Thessalonian Christians about loving one another was that it was something they had learned from God (v. 9).
 - 9) The phrase "taught of God" may refer to the teaching of Jesus, which the Apostles were already sharing in the churches.
 - 10) For example, the Christians of Thessalonica may have been familiar with the words of Jesus concerning loving God and others, which we find in Matthew 22:36-40.
 - 11) It is also possible that Paul's statement affirms that when God saves someone,
 - 12) He pours His love into their hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).
 - 13) This divine love, which the indwelling Holy Spirit activates, then overflows from the heart of the Christian to others (John 7:38-39).
 - 14) It is likely that both the teaching of Jesus and the reality of God's love in Christians were intended by the phrase "taught of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:9).

B. Love One Another by Working - 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

- 1) After commending their love for one another and encouraging them to love one another more and more, Paul pointed out an area where some of the Thessalonian Christians could improve.
- 2) Apparently, there were some among the believers in Thessalonica who, although able-bodied, were not working to meet their own needs or the needs of others in the church.
- 3) Those who could work but chose to remain idle would have become an unnecessary burden on the rest of the Christian community.
- 4) It would have been the responsibility of the church and family members, not the government, to attend to the needs of those unable to care for themselves.
- 5) The church was responsible for caring for fellow Christians in need because it was a family of faith; they were God's family.
- 6) In first-century secular usage, the term translated as "*brotherly love*" in 1 Thessalonians 4:9 was used for family relationships.
- 7) However, through their union of faith in Christ, believers become members of God's family.
- 8) Paul wished to see that all the brothers and sisters in Thessalonica were adequately cared for, saying, "*that ye may have lack of nothing*" (v. 12).
- 9) But he also wanted the church there to be respected by non-Christians, or at the very least for them not to bring reproach to the name of Christ.
- 10) Church members who refused to work would be bad witnesses to those outside the church, and instead of attracting unbelievers to the faith, it would turn them away from it.

Call To Discipleship

As we continue to mature in the Lord, we should identify the areas in our lives that God approves of and seek, through His grace, to improve what may be deficient.

Ministry In Action

As Christians, we should encourage others to grow in grace and mature as "*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people*" (1 Peter 2:9).

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Lesson 10

PAUL'S TRAVELING MINISTRY COLLEAGUES

During his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36–18:21; AD 50-52), Paul was accompanied from the beginning by Silas (15:40-41). Later, Timothy joined them (16:1-3), and later still, Luke joined them (16:6-10). The “we” in verse 10 reveals where and when Luke, the writer of The Acts of the Apostles, joined Paul and company on his Second Missionary Journey.

Who was Silas, Paul's ministry colleague on his Second Missionary Journey?

Silas was a highly regarded member of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22, 27). He was also a prophet (15:32) and, like Paul, a Roman citizen (16:37). Silas is mentioned by name 13 times in The Acts of the Apostles, and four times elsewhere in the New Testament by the name Sylvanus, as preaching with Paul to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 2:19); as a joint author with Paul and Timothy of the letters to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1); and, finally, as the writer of First Peter, as dictated to him by Peter (1 Peter 5:12).

Who was Timothy, Paul's ministry colleague on his Second Missionary Journey?

Timothy is mentioned by the name *Timothy* seven times in the New Testament, and 17 times by the name *Timotheus*. His mother and grandmother were devout Jews who became believers in Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 1:5), and Timothy, being a disciple well-spoken of by his fellow Christians, was enlisted by Paul to be one of his ministry colleagues (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy became like a son to Paul (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2). The closeness of their relationship is made clear in the two letters Paul wrote to Timothy.

Who was Luke, Paul's ministry colleague on his Second Missionary Journey?

Luke is mentioned by name only three times in the New Testament: as the beloved physician (Colossians 4:14); as *Lucas* in Philemon 1:24; and as the only Christian still with Paul at Rome, before Paul's execution by Nero (2 Timothy 4:11). The early church identified Luke as the writer of the Gospel by Luke and Acts of the Apostles. Many think Luke was a Gentile convert to Christ, while others think he was a Hellenistic Jew like Paul and one of the Seventy (Luke 10:120). The “we” passages in Acts chapters 16 through 28 reveal when Luke was with Paul.

SPIRITUAL LIVING

1. How does 1 Thessalonians 5:15 command us to live inside and outside the church, and how can we do this?

2. In what ways could we “quench” the Holy Spirit (v. 19), and how can we avoid doing this?

3. Why must we, as Christians, “abstain from every form of evil” (v. 22)?

4. An alarming percentage of churchgoers admit to using pornography, which Garrett Kell calls “satanic discipleship.” He continues, “It trains us to see people and situations in perverted ways and become calloused to the way it grieves God. But by continually beholding Jesus, God transforms us to think and love like Jesus by serving people rather than using them for sinful satisfaction” (Pure in Heart: Sexual Sin and the Promises of God).

—How can we keep our focus on Jesus?

5. How can we grow “more and more” (4:10) in our love for fellow believers, and why should we strive to do so (v. 9)?