

Walk and Please God

1 Thessalonians 4

This letter makes it clear that we cannot simply accept the gift of salvation and continue as we always have. True believers strive to deepen their understanding of God and increase their obedience to Him. Acknowledging that suffering is a regular part of the believer's life, Paul encourages all believers to press on in hope, living lives that please God.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

1. Look back at 1 Thessalonians. 3:12. What did Paul pray the Lord would do in the lives of the believers living in Thessalonica?

2. In 1 Thessalonians. 4:1, Paul urges and exhorts the believers to abound more and more in how to do what?

3. **THINK:** What do you think it means to abound more and more in something?

4. Read the following verses and record what you learn about pleasing God.

John 14:15	
Romans 8:8	
Hebrews 10:38	
Hebrews 11:6	

5. Using the verses above, how would you summarize the steps a believer can take to please God?

6. **THINK:** What point do you think Paul was trying to make when he said, “for you know what commandments we gave you...” as it relates to walking and pleasing God?

Commandments – announcement, a proclaiming or giving a message to, used of the Christian doctrine relative to right living

It is impossible to walk and please God without knowing what He desires and expects of His children. Paul did not leave any of us wondering what God expects when it comes to holy living. He not only tells us what to do but also how to do it and why.

7. What is the first reason given for walking worthy (holy living)? (1 Thessalonians 4:3a)

8. What is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit and the long-term will of God that takes place as we walk worthy? (v. 3b)

Sanctification - purification

In the Bible, there are two different kinds of sanctification. Positional sanctification occurs at the time of salvation. The moment we are saved, the blood of Jesus washes us and we can stand righteous in Him before God the Father (1 Corinthians 1:30). Practical (experiential or progressive) sanctification describes the effect of cooperating with the Holy Spirit in obedience to God’s Word throughout our lifetime. It is the ongoing process of sanctification that Paul is talking about here.

9. What is God's will as it relates to our sanctification? (vv. 3c, 4a, 6a)

Abstaining from Sexual Immorality

Abstain – to hold oneself off, refrain, abstain

Sexual Immorality – illicit sexual immorality including adultery, sex before or outside of marriage, homosexuality, intercourse with animals or close relatives, pornography

10. **THINK:** Why do you think we need to “hold ourselves off” when it comes to sexual immorality?

11. Read the following verses and describe God's design for marriage and plan for sex.

Matthew 19:4-6	
Genesis 1:28	
1 Corinthians 7:3-5	
Ephesians 5:22, 25	

12. Read the following verses and record what you learn about why we should hold ourselves off from deviating from His design.

Acts 15:28-29	
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1 Corinthians 6:12-20	
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When godly men and women adhere to God's design for marriage, they can expect their efforts to result in steadfast and fruitful marriages. These marriages serve as a powerful picture of the oneness between Jesus Christ and His bride, the church.

Possessing His Own Vessel in Sanctification and Honor

The Bible is clear. When it comes to believers, there is no place for any amount of sexual immorality. The idea expressed in 1 Thess. 4:4 is that believers (male or female) should save their bodies for marriage. This is how we possess our vessel in a way that reflects sanctification and honors God.

13. Read 2 Timothy 2:19-22 and record what it looks like to possess your own vessel.

As vessels set apart for God, we are not to be controlled by our passions, driven to take or do whatever we desire. Instead, we are to hold ourselves off from this behavior and restrict our sexual encounters in sanctification to one man and one woman joined in holy matrimony. In this, we bring honor and glory to God and the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

14. **THINK:** 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 indicates that unbelievers engage in sexual immorality because they do not know God. Why do you think knowing God helps us to approach sex differently than the world around us?

While sexual sin is often one of the easiest sins to fall into, it can also be one of the hardest sins to walk away from. It often means making major changes in your life. It may mean quitting a job, ending a relationship, or even changing where you currently live. This can seem overwhelming and might even feel impossible, but nothing is impossible with God. He always provides a way for us to escape and live for Him.

No One Should Take Advantage of and Defraud His Brother in this Matter

There are two prevailing interpretations of this Scripture. Both are in line with the whole counsel of God's Word, so I will touch on both. First, as believers, we are not to take advantage of another through our sexual immorality.

15. **THINK:** How can one's sexual immorality take advantage of or rob someone else? Consider how each of the following takes advantage of or robs another.

Sex before marriage: _____

Adultery: _____

Pornography: _____

Secondly, as believers, we are not to take advantage of or defraud others in our dealings with them.

16. Read the following verses and describe God's will in our dealings with others.

Proverbs 11:1	
Proverbs 22:1	
Isaiah 1:17	

Matthew 5:40-42	
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17. What warning is given in 1 Thess. 4:6? _____

Avenger - punisher

18. **THINK:** Why do you think God is sure to discipline a believer for taking advantage of others?

19. Verse 7 reminds us that God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness, He calls us to be holy. What is the reality of rejecting God's call to holiness concerning sexual immorality? (v. 8)

20. **THINK:** Why do you think Paul added the phrase "God, who has given us His Holy Spirit"?

21. Read John 14:26, John 16:12-14, Romans 8:14, and Galatians 5:22-23; then summarize the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

These verses encourage us to abound more and more in holiness as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the ongoing sanctification process. We will need to know God and hold ourselves off if we are to be successful, but HE HAS GIVEN US HIS HOLY SPIRIT.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12.

22. What four exhortations does Paul turn his attention to in these verses? (vv. 9b/c, 11a, 11b, 11c)

23. **THINK:** How do you think God teaches us to love one another?

Quiet Life – to lead a quiet life, said of those who are not running hither and thither, but stay at home and mind their own business

24. What reasons does Paul list for abounding more in brotherly love, leading a quiet life, minding your own business, and working with your hands? (v. 12)

25. **THINK:** What role do these four things play in walking properly toward those who are outside (unbelievers)?

Abounding in brotherly love: _____

Leading a quiet life: _____

Minding your own business: _____

Working with your hands: _____

The King James Version of 1 Thessalonians 4:11 says, "...study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands..." Most of us could benefit from classes on being quiet, minding our own business, and what it truly means to set aside idleness and focus on something of value.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Remember, Paul first visited Thessalonica on his second missionary journey and stayed for less than a month. As we study 1 and 2 Thessalonians, we can see that Paul covered a great deal of information (walking worthy, the rapture, the tribulation, and the Antichrist) during his brief visit. In these two letters, Paul seeks to answer their questions regarding these topics. Here, Paul is not defending whether the Rapture will happen, but rather answering the question, "What if someone dies before it does?"

Ignorant – not to know through lack of information or intelligence by implication, to ignore

Those who have fallen asleep – equivalent to dead

Caught up – used of divine power transferring a person marvelously and swiftly from one place to another, to snatch or catch away

26. Death can be a scary thing to think about, and Paul had shared some things that were difficult to understand or even believe. What truth did he want them to anchor their confidence in that would help them accept what he was saying? (v. 14)

27. **THINK:** As you read the exciting and miraculous details of the event described in verses 16-18, what do you think was the main point Paul was trying to convey to these persecuted believers?

28. As a believer, there is no advantage to being dead or alive at the time of His return. Both will share in this remarkable event. On what authority did Paul share this information, and what did he long for them to do? (vv. 15, 18)

A Closer Look at Brotherly Love

1 Thessalonians 4:9

When we come to salvation, we become members of the family of God. Ephesians 2:19 states, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

29. Read Galatians 3:26-29. What do these verses teach you about your place in God's family?

The word **love** in 1 Thessalonians 4:9 is the Greek word *philadelphia*. In the New Testament, it represents a love that Christians cherish for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. As children of God, we are called to love all those in God's family.

30. Read John 13:34. What is the new commandment? What is our reason for obeying this command?

31. What do the following verses teach you about brotherly love as a believer in Jesus?

John 13:35

1 John 3:16

As a faithful follower of Jesus, loving our brothers and sisters in Christ should be an outpouring of gratitude for the love Jesus has shown us. It is an act of self-denial, but one we should all be willing to do.

32. Philippians 2:3-4 gives commands that result in brotherly love. According to these verses, what must you be doing to love your fellow believers with *philadelphia* love?

33. Give some examples of how to put these verses into practice.

34. According to the following Scriptures, **how** are we to love one another?

Romans 12:10

1 Peter 1:22

35. What is the sobering truth found in 1 John 4:20-21?

36. List all the attributes of love found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

37. What is the sobering truth found in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3?

38. When we live to be a blessing to our brothers and sisters in Christ, we fulfill God's desire for His church to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). Are you fulfilling God's desire to cherish your brothers and sisters in Christ? Are you esteeming others higher than yourself and looking out for the needs of others? Write out a response to God's call to brotherly love.

"Let brotherly love continue."
- Hebrews 13:1