

Life Group Notes 5/19/2024  
Pastor Mark Warren 1 Thessalonians Week 4

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[No doctrine is a given unless it has been found in the Word given by the Holy Spirit and received by you. If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at [tbeachhead@comcast.net](mailto:tbeachhead@comcast.net). Thank you for taking the time—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.]

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP.** BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! **Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study.**

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Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 5/19. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnotes include:

1. [On your sanctification/becoming holy.](#)
2. [On sexual immorality \(πορνεία/porneia\).](#)

\*\*\***Important:** At the very [end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week. \*\*\*

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Pastor begins by suggesting that holiness and happiness are linked.

1. Is that a strange combination?
2. Can you explain in what way they are linked?
3. Look up Proverbs 21:3 **2**All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart. **3**[To do righteousness and justice is more desirable to the LORD than sacrifice.](#) Does this explain the link?
4. Look up Psalm 69: **30***I will praise God's name in song and exalt Him with thanksgiving.* **31**[And this will please the LORD more than an ox, more than a bull with horns and hooves.](#) **32***The humble will see and rejoice. You who seek God, let your hearts be revived!*
5. Review Micah 6: **8***He has shown you, O man, what is good and what the LORD require of you: but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.* What does the Lord ask of us? What does holiness look like?
6. Look at these verses again. What is the impact of holiness on the neighbors?

Now look at how Paul exhorts his friends in Thessalonica:

**1***Finally, brothers, we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus to live in a way that is pleasing to God, just as you have received from us. This is how you already live, so you should do so all the more.* **2***For you know the instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.*

*3For it is God's will that you should be holy: You must abstain from sexual immorality; 4each of you must know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6and no one should ever violate or exploit his brother in this regard, because the Lord will avenge all such acts, as we have already told you and solemnly warned you. 7For God has not called us to impurity, but to holiness. 8Anyone, then, who rejects this command does not reject man but God, the very One who gives you His Holy Spirit.*

Pastor calls on us to ask ourselves, "Am I walking in a way that is pleasing to God?"

1. Why is this a difficult question?
2. Pastor says, "It raises doubts: Am I measuring up? Am I not measuring up?" Why are these questions so distracting?
3. What does it mean to "...measure up?" What do you do if you are not "measuring up?"
4. What does a walk that is pleasing to God look like?
5. What standards does Paul set in these verses? When did the Thessalonians receive these standards from Paul?
6. Look at verse 1: How well did the Thessalonians receive the standards?
7. If you're a parent, how excited were you at your child's first steps?
8. Did you punish the child whenever he stumbled? Why not?
9. Why is it necessary review with new Christians?
10. List the most important facets of holiness.
11. What does it take to be pleasing to God? (See the verses above.)
12. Pastor says, thinking of parenting, "To please God we walk in such a way that God gets concrete pleasure to see how we are moving." You are walking in the way for which you were designed. Look at the end of verse 1: "*This is how you already live, so you should do so all the more...*" How is growth part of the package?
13. Is it actually possible to give God concrete pleasure? Answer. What do you think?
14. Now look up Acts 10: *1At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was called the Italian Regiment. 2He and all his household were devout and God-fearing. He gave generously to the people and prayed to God regularly. 3One day at about the ninth hour, he had a clear vision of an angel of God who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" 4Cornelius stared at him in fear and asked, "What is it, Lord?" The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have ascended as a memorial offering before God."* To what degree did Cornelius give God concrete pleasure? What did he do?
15. Now look at verse 3. What is the will of God? What does this include?
16. What does it not include?
17. See [the footnote on sanctification](#) below. What do you see? What is the ultimate goal? Whom are we to resemble?

Pastor says, "You are being called to live in a way that is separated from the way everybody else lives, into the way God prescribes, which is God's original design."

1. Think of the parenting example above: How is this a process, tantamount to learning to walk, and not a moment in time?

2. Look again at verse 3. See [the footnote below on sexual immorality](#). What do you see?
3. Look at what Paul explains to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2: *19* Nevertheless, God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord must turn away from iniquity." *20* [A large house contains not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some indeed are for honorable use, but others are for common use.](#) *21* So if anyone cleanses himself of what is unfit, he will be a vessel for honor: sanctified, useful to the Master, and prepared for every good work. How does this fit? What are the steps necessary to "cleanse oneself?"
4. Now, in this light, look at verse 4 above: *4* each of you must know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, *5* not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God Who is responsible for your behavior? What distinguishes a Christian from those who do not know God?
5. Why is "self-control" a fruit of the Spirit, and something that must therefore be fostered and cultivated, and not imposed?

Discuss Pastor Mark's illustration of the garbage can vs. the antique flower vase.

1. What goes in each?
2. He says, "In living for yourself, selfishly, you begin to say, 'I need to do something for myself that will make me feel better.' Folks who have suffered addiction understand this." Explain.
3. Why are holiness and happiness removed from this attitude? What has the person living only for the flesh "sold off?" ([See the footnote below.](#))
4. What is the fruit of living for the flesh?
5. How does that one's life become the trash can of Pastor Mark's illustration?
6. Compare where one places the trash can in the house to where one places the vase filled with fresh flowers. Why? Which smells better?
7. Look at the passage from [Acts 10](#) above again. How do Cornelius' acts fit into Mark's illustration? What did Cornelius pour out and on whom?
8. What prompted Cornelius?
9. (Notice this principle: Was Cornelius a "Christian" as we understand Christian when the angel spoke to him? Why is that important? What does this say of the eyes of the Lord? Whom is he always watching?)
10. Look up Luke 6: *38* Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." How is this illustrated in Cornelius? Does this verse apply only to Christians?
11. What happens when one gives? What happens when one does not give?
12. Is it possible to outgive God?
13. Look up Proverbs 11: *23* The desire of the righteous leads only to good, but the hope of the wicked brings wrath. *24* [One gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor.](#) *25* A generous soul will prosper, and he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. Compare this proverb to Jesus' promise in Luke. How are righteousness and happiness associated?
14. What measure do you use? Do you have a testimony?

Continuing: *9*Now about brotherly love, you do not need anyone to write to you, because you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. *10*And you are indeed showing this love to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to excel more and more *11*and to aspire to live quietly, to attend to your own matters, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you. *12*Then you will behave properly toward outsiders, without being dependent on anyone.

1. What do you see?
2. In contrast to the world's way, how have the Thessalonian Christians distinguished themselves?
3. How did the Thessalonians learn to love one another?
4. What does it mean to be "taught by God?" (How does our Teacher distinguish Christianity from any other religion?) Have you been "taught by God?" Do you have a testimony?
5. Are we done learning?
6. Pastor Mark says, "Sanctification/holiness is about somebody else." Why do our priorities matter?
7. How is growth reemphasized? (See verse 1 again.)
8. How has the example of the Thessalonians served the spread of the gospel throughout the province of Macedonia?
9. Look at verse 11. Is Paul urging the Macedonians to go out and evangelize?
10. How does good behavior serve the spread of the gospel?
11. What is their good behavior in contrast to?
12. Look at the result Paul describes in verse 12. Take a moment. What does a church look like that "...behaves properly toward outsiders without being dependent on anyone...?"
13. To what degree is the church preoccupied with everyone else's life? To what degree should we be preoccupied with everyone else's life?
14. What did Jesus mean when He called us the "Light of the World" and the "Salt of the Earth?" How are we doing?
15. What will it take for us to do even better?
16. What will change if we aspire to live quietly, to attend to your own matters, and to work with your own hands? How would that change your own life and practice?

Pastor ended by admonishing us to look at things intended to build others up, not tearing them down. He said, "The world knows how to do that and does it well." He says, "Our satisfaction and our peace come from saying, 'I'm choosing to be set apart for God's purposes. I'm choosing not to pursue selfish pleasures, and self-satisfaction.'" You will see the needs around you, and you will learn how to respond.

1. Is this how the Thessalonians were taught by God to love the brethren?
  2. How do you think Cornelius learned to prioritize giving?
  3. How does one learn to understand fulfillment?
  4. What does holiness look like?
  5. What will our neighbors see if we all take these steps?
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### **The Follow-up Application**

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Ask yourself this question this week, and review your answer: “Am I walking in a way that is pleasing to God?” Jot down the thoughts that come to you.
3. Make two lists from the notes above: What acts and qualities are found on the “highway to holiness?” What acts are NOT on that highway?
4. Pastor Mark made several suggestions: Volunteer. Offer your expertise and get involved. Pour your life into the life of another. Let the Holy Spirit be your guide and inspiration. Choose and do it.
5. Aspire to live quietly, to attend to your own matters, and to work with your own hands. Make a note of anything that changes. Measure your happiness level.

### **Take the time to pray.**

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#### **Scribe's Notes:**

1. **On your sanctification/becoming holy**—Paul says in verse 4, that this is God’s will for us all, even our “ἁγιασμός,” *hagiasmos*, defined as the process of making or becoming holy, set apart. Notice that it is a process, and not a sudden change, but the result is our sanctification, our holiness and our consecration... Strong’s points out that it is “the process of advancing in *holiness*; used of the believer being progressively transformed by the Lord into His likeness (similarity of nature).” Notice the emphasis on growth and progress. Review this process that comes up so often as we have seen in 2 Peter 1: *5For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; 6and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8For if you possess these qualities and continue to grow in them, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9But whoever lacks these traits is nearsighted to the point of blindness, having forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. 10Therefore, brothers, strive to make your calling and election sure. For if you practice these things you will never stumble, 11and you will receive a lavish reception into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*
2. **On sexual immorality (πορνεία/*porneia*)**—The Greek word for sexual immorality is *porneia*. This is the root of the word “pornography” that is found in many western languages. It relates to any form of fornication, whoredom; even metaphorically: idolatry... Strong’s points out that “*porneía* (the root of the English terms “pornography, pornographic”; cf. [4205](#) /*pórnos*) is derived from *pernaō*, “**to sell off**” – properly, a *selling off* (surrendering) of sexual purity; *promiscuity* of any (every) type.” What is most instructive is what Strong’s says concerning the cultural implications and the battles of the early church: “...*That this meaning must be adopted in these passages will surprise no one who has learned from [1 Corinthians 6:12ff](#) how leniently*

*converts from among the heathen regarded this vice and how lightly they indulged in it; accordingly, all other interpretations of the term, such as of marriages within the prohibited degrees and the like, are to be rejected.*

**For further study:**

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP**... (**S**cripture—Copy the scripture. / **O**bservation—Write what you see. / **A**pplication—What is God saying? / **P**ray—What is your response?) ...method to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2
Tuesday: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
Wednesday: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12
Thursday: Proverbs 21:2-3
Friday: 2 Timothy 2:19-21
Saturday: Acts 10:1-4
Sunday: Luke 6:38

Once again, some passages suggested here have more than the usual number of verses. This is not to increase the burden but to provide clarity of context. Pick the verses that speak to you most clearly, and run these through the SOAP steps.