

LESSON 5: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

God's Will: Your Sanctification

1. In verse 1, Paul writes of how he'd instructed the Thessalonians "to live in order to please God" – literally, "to walk and please God." What truths are suggested by words "walk" and "please"? See 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 4:1; 5:17; Colossians 1:10; 2:6; 4:5.
2. A more literal translation of verse 1 might read: "Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more." What do you think it means when he writes that he requests these things "in the Lord Jesus"? How does this deepen our understanding of the import of Jesus' words in Matthew 18:19-20? Finally, what is the basis of Paul's authority (v. 2), and why is this so important to him? (See 1 Thessalonians 1:3-7, 13; Galatians 1:1,11-12.)
3. Christians often struggle with the question of "What is God's will for my life?" What is one element of God's will for your life (v. 3)? How important do you think this is? Explain what it means to be "sanctified," "holy." (See 1 Corinthians 1:2.) How does this help you as you seek to discern God's will in given situations of your life. Read Isaiah 1:10-17; Isaiah 56:1-2; and Psalm 106:1? What is justice, and what do you think is the connection between doing justice and being holy?
4. Paul's emphasis in verses 3-8 is on avoiding sexual immorality (Greek, *porneia*). Read Matthew 5:32; 15:19; John 8:41; Acts 15:29; and 1 Corinthians 6:9-20. What is *porneia*? Who does it harm? Why do you think this emphasis on sexual purity looms so large in biblical teaching, even in the New Testament? Are we not freed from the law and its constricting ordinances? (*Hint*: What is the difference between the Law as Paul speaks of it and the Creation Ordinances given by God to mankind; how does the emphasis on sexual purity connect here?)

5. How might our “brother” be wronged in this matter (v. 6)?

6. What does it mean to “know God”? In what way might even the unbelieving Gentiles “know” God? In what ways do they not know God?

7. List the commands set forth in verses 11-12? How do these relate to the appeal for brotherly love (Greek, *philadelphia*; in vv. 9-10)? How are we “taught by God” (v. 9; Isa. 54:13; John 6:45; 2 Cor. 2:13)? (Read 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12, and discuss how that verse sheds some light on Paul’s words here.)

8. What are the attitudes, words, and actions that you would expect from a Christian who daily walks with and pleases God? Devise a code of ethics for a Christian in today’s society (vv. 1-12). How would you implement such a code in your daily activities?