

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Instructions for Lives That Please God

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:14-22

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Make a list of Paul's admonitions for use in both the Bible Study time and in the worship time. The list is found at the end of the Worship Time materials.

Make enough copies of the list for each youth to have for use during their “Take Ten!!!” application time of the session.

Worship Time Leader:

You will refer to the list of Paul’s admonitions which was prepared for the Bible Study time.

Music Sources:

The Greatest Thing, *The Worship Hymnal*, #527; CCLI #11500

I Love You, Lord, *The Worship Hymnal*, #555; CCLI #25266

Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart, *The Worship Hymnal*, #578; CCLI #3220700

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Instructions for Lives That Please God*****Focal Text**

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:14-22

Background Text

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:14-22

Main Idea

Christians are to live so as to please God and bless others.

Question to Explore

What is distinctive about the Christian lifestyle?

Teaching Aim

To help the church measure their lives by qualities of life that please God and bless others.

Gathering together:

Sing "The Greatest Thing".

First thoughts:

At a recent home church group, the discussion turned to how we could share our Christian beliefs with someone who for whatever reason had determined that the Christian faith was one of a set of negative "do not's". We talked together of the reality that for us our faith was based on positives – living with honour and integrity; caring for one another in times of need; sharing with the less fortunate. We acknowledged that some fellow Christians had disappointed us, but we knew of many more who had lived their lives following Godly principles.

In today's scripture, Paul affirms that positive view of the Christian life. At the same time, he focused on the aspect of sexual purity. "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4).

This is, of course, a huge issue for many in our society today. It was an issue for the people of Paul's day, as well. Sexual purity has not been easy for mankind since the beginning of time. It is an issue for young people, for middle aged people and even for older people. Little about our society encourages sexual purity and living it out over the life span is truly a challenge. It calls for our highest level of commitment and a dependence on the Holy Spirit for strength. As we study today, may we carefully examine our own lives and hearts for pure motives and right conduct and actions.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

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Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Instructions for Lives That Please God

Focal Text

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:14-22

Background Text

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Main Idea

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Question to Explore

What is distinctive about the Christian lifestyle?

Teaching Aim

To help the church measure their lives by qualities of life that please God and bless others.

Introduction to your personal study:

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject many but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

1 Thessalonians 5:14-22

And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

We remind ourselves again of Paul's relationship to the Thessalonian church. Paul had preached there for a short time several years before the writing of this book. His message of the Christ was received and apparently a group of believers formed who continued to worship and serve. Paul's letter affirms these believers and his advice is an encouragement to them. Paul loves these people and wants the best for them. He has perhaps heard of issues within the church or he is addressing issues which have arisen in other places and he assumes will be important to these people as well.

His list of things to do and attitudes to have is not comprehensive. This is not Paul's last word on how to live the Christian faith, but it is full of many important concepts.

Perhaps, most importantly, it emphasizes that the reason we do or do not do certain things is that our principal aim is to please God. No list of things to do or not do would be comprehensive enough to cover every possible temptation we might face in life. But if our desire is to please God, then we have a measuring stick by which to make critical life decisions.

One of the problems that the Jewish people created for themselves over many years came from allowing their belief in God to be circumscribed or proven by adherence to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of small rules on how to live their lives correctly. Eventually, a person's ability to adhere to the seemingly endless list became the goal instead of worshipping God and seeking to please Him with a life committed to important things of conduct and action.

“Does this action, attitude, belief, or prayer please God?” How often would we make a quick correction if we asked ourselves that question more often? Does worrying about finances please God? Does being angry at the driver in the next lane please God? Is God pleased when all of my money is spent on my personal wants and desires or those of my closest family?

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians and encourages us down through these many years to strive to please God more fully. His instructions come, not through Paul's own worldly wisdom, but by “the authority of the Lord Jesus” (4:2).

Focusing on the Meaning:

The issue of sexual purity

The Gentile world from whom the Thessalonian believers had come and among whom they lived was one where many lived, as Paul said, “in passionate lust”. Women had little value and sexual satisfaction for the male was part of both ordinary life and of pagan religious worship.

Women had not always been treated well within the Jewish tradition, either. There was, however, throughout the Old Testament, a higher moral standard. David lusted for Bathsheba and impregnated her. In order to avoid responsibility to her husband, David ordered this military leader, Uriah the Hittite, home to be with his wife. He wanted Uriah to be thought to be the father of the child. Uriah, however, refused to leave his military duties and go home. David then concocted a scheme whereby Uriah would be sent to the front lines of battle, be deserted by his fellow soldiers, and left to be killed. It was a cruelly calculated plan by David and was successful. Uriah was killed. David could then marry his widow, Bathsheba, and did.

David was held accountable by the prophet Nathan. He made David realize his sin and told him of the consequences of it which included the death of the child that was conceived. David did repent of his sin and many of the Psalms (songs of David) directly reflect that repentance. (See 2 Samuel 11-12).

David's family life, however, did not reflect the higher moral standards by which a man like David might have been expected to live. Over time great suffering came to David and to the Israelites as some of David's children lived their own selfish lives.

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Instructions for Lives That Please God – 22-49-03-en

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It is this great selfishness that Paul emphasizes in 1 Thessalonians 3:6 “and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him.”

The great ripple effect of sexual immorality seems at times to overwhelm society. Children are left with young mothers who, as parents, may struggle with issues of self-worth and finances which threaten to overcome them. Church leaders leave their congregations struggling to make sense of their leader’s immoral activities and children and teens struggle on their faith journey to understand how a leader could sin so dramatically. Wives and husbands are wounded at the very core of their beings by unfaithful spouses. Political figures destroy trust. Paul has said, **“and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him.”**

It is, of course, the great mantra of today’s world that an open and liberated sexual attitude avoids wronging another. All sex is to be consensual and nobody gets hurt.

However, male/female relationships are often unequal in power and women still bear the brunt of unwanted pregnancies and forced abortions.

In Alexander McCall Smith’s bestselling stories about Precious Ramotswe, the owner of the No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency, Mma. Ramotswe visits a friend in the book called *The Kalahari Typing School for Men*. The friend introduces her two granddaughters who are living with her. One is a teen whose own mother is away caring for her mother. The other is a two year old – the daughter of the friend’s deceased daughter.

Mma. Ramotswe reached across and took the child’s hand in her own.

“She is a very pretty child, Mma.” She said. “She will grow into a very pretty lady in time.”

Mma. Tsolamosese looked at her and turned her head away. Mma. Ramotswe thought that she had offended her in some way but could not work out why this should be. It was perfectly polite to compliment a grandmother on the prettiness of her granddaughter; indeed, not to do so would have been unfeeling.

“I’m sorry if I upset you.” said Mma . Ramotswe. “I did not mean to.”

Mma Tsolamosese put down her pestle. Her voice, when she spoke, sounded tired: “It is not your fault, Mma. You were not to know. That child...the mother, who is late (dead) had that disease which has run this way and that way through the country, and everywhere. That is what took her. And the child...”

Mma. Romotswe could tell what was coming.

“The doctor said that the child will become ill, too, sooner or later.” said Mma Tsolamosese. “She will not live. That is why I was upset. You did not mean it, but you

were talking about something that will never be". (Smith, Alexander McCall (2002) The Kalahari Typing School for Men". Vintage Canada.)

Perhaps that is the most telling comment about sexual freedom. We may do what we want, but we never know what might never be because of the choice we make.

The teenage mother may be a very good mother; maturity may come rather quickly at the birth of the baby. Her family may be supportive and great love be given the child. Yet some dreams and aspirations and "possibilities" will never be realized.

Paul speaks of learning to control our body – to not be subject to its desires, but to live in a way that is holy and honourable. Can we, in our own minds, and in the hearts and minds of those in our sphere of influence emphasize, as Paul did, the beauty of the "controlled" life which is holy and honourable.

Many young adult Christians have an "accountability" partner. They may meet every week or two for Bible study. They pray together and encourage one another. And they have pledged to be honest with one another. One might say, "I was really tempted to change something about my income tax report. I'm pretty sure it would never be noticed." The other would reply, "How do you think God would have you act in that situation?" One might say, "There is a new lady in our office who seems to notice me. I thought about asking her to have coffee with me. With the new baby at our house, my wife is really not much fun these days." The other might reply, "Would you risk your relationship with your wife and your new baby for anything?" He might also add, "Next week is Valentine's Day; could my wife and I keep your new baby so that you and your wife could have a date night."

Many Christians are uncomfortable with the idea of "confessing" to anyone, but God. That is a Biblical truth – we have one mediator between us and the father – Jesus Christ.

Nonetheless, a friend in human skin to whom we feel responsible may be a very healthy relationship in areas fraught with temptation such as the area of sexual purity. Accountability partners of the same sex are great ideas for both women and men.

Finally, we must remember that sexual propriety, that is, sexual purity, is a responsibility of girls and women just as much as men. Appropriate (ie: non-sexually stimulating) dressing, talking, body "language", control over "flirting" and touching, and restricted and pure thinking are hugely influential in keeping male/female relationships where they morally should be.

A famous Christian psychologist once said of the above: "If you start and 'rev up' an airplane's engine—sooner or later the plane will take off." Shut off the motor!

Issues of everyday life

It is not surprising that Paul should transition from the issue of sexual purity to that of brotherly love. He has already emphasized that sexual purity involves being concerned for others—spouses—as well as those women or men over whom we have influence and for whom we may have attraction. Now he emphasizes that the relationship within the church is one of brotherly love.

Many of these new Christians may have lost families when they made the decision to become Christians. That reality is still true for many people in many places in the world today. Women, particularly, were vulnerable if they fell outside of the protection of the family. One of the truly remarkable things about the Christian community in the early days of Christianity was the way in which Christians became family to one another. Paul comments on this salient feature of New Testament Christianity by calling believers to greater and deeper levels of brotherly love.

Healthy families invest time and energy with one another. That may mean long phone calls, extra help with child care, care of elderly parents, patience with pain which a family member experiences or inflicts. Living in family is a big commitment.

Living in Christian family is a big commitment, too. Brotherly love is expressed by taking the son of a single mom on a ski trip; by volunteering child care for a weary mother; by making sure that the elderly couple whose children live far away are eating with someone on Christmas Day.

Paul encourages the church to “make it your ambition to live a quiet life.” That doesn’t seem to be such a problem for a 67 year old who watched only a few minutes of the Super Bowl half time ceremony. But what does it mean for a young couple who want to minister to and impact their peers?

One commentator said that Paul’s readers were dwellers in a rowdy, bustling, largely-populated city, where noise, confusion, and haste were the constant expressions of the community’s mood and life. Thus, Paul summons his readers to a deliberate calmness, peace of mind, disciplined self-control, and inner guidance. The achievement of this attitude of life would be secured only by the spiritual means of prayer, reflection, and regular daily periods of appointed silence. (The Interpreter’s Bible, Volume XI, 1955, p. 298).

Part of the economic downturn of 2009 may be a re-evaluation of how North Americans, at the least, choose to live a “quiet life”. What entertainment venues will be considered essential? What holidays will be changed in favour of “closer to home” activities?

One young family has chosen to invest in a number of board games. They much prefer playing a board game to watching TV or even using their new computer game. It takes a lot of patience for an 8 and 11 year old to include a 3 and 5 year old in the game, but as much as possible, the family works to do that. Some games are at the three and five year old level and a different kind of patience is needed.

Paul says that Christians are **“to mind your own business”**. Perhaps in this close knit group which was like family there were those who liked to talk about someone else’s problems. The careful line between concern and nosiness is always a challenge. Even families must realize that there are some issues which are the concern and interest of all the group and others which are “off limits”. Parenting children may be one of those; ways of spending money may be another. Living in harmony requires us “to mind our own business.”

“Work with your hands”. An ordained minister and educator found one of his most natural opportunities for relationship and ministry came when he was working evenings in the retirement home he was building. He had learned cabinet building as a child from his father and he worked hard at building kitchen cabinets for his new home. The builder and the tradespeople alike respected this and several gave opportunity for witness and ministry. He won the respect of outsiders by doing a task they didn’t expect him to do and doing it well.

1 Thessalonians 5: 14-22

And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.

A group of pithy teachings –***Warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everybody.***

Some commentators feel that some of the Thessalonian Christians may have felt that Christ’s imminent return made ordinary work unnecessary. That has occurred in various times throughout history. Yet Christ himself said that even he did not know the hour or time of his return (Mark 13:32; Matthew 24:36).

Paul simply says to warn those who are idle. Paul indicates his own willingness to work and gives that as an example to others.

Be patient with everyone. This includes those who don’t “mind their own business”. These practical and tender words of how to live in interpersonal relationships were Paul’s gift to people he loved. **“Be patient with everyone”**. Being patient with others requires that we understand the basic value of each human being. It also requires that we understand that the church is made up of people with different gifts and abilities, but each of those contribute to the good of the body.

Don't pay back wrong for wrong. A very human desire is to get back at people who have wronged us. Paul would urge us to look at our issues in light of the greater good of the group and of the individual.

Be joyful, give thanks, pray continually. Paul is drawing together the many practical teachings he has given. Your attitude is one of joy; you are thankful; you are praying continually for those who are idle, for those for whom you might have little patience, for those who have wronged you. And in that prayer, you are transformed. Your desire for revenge is gone; your patience with the annoying is strengthened; you find yourself thankful when earlier you were wanting something.

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.

Paul seems to want to include every good teaching he can. He reminds the people of the importance of being led by the Holy Spirit; he reminds them that prophetic utterances are of value, but then asks them to test everything. In Christian community, we must assume that God will speak to others. But we filter what they say to us through our own knowledge of Scripture and our understanding of the work of the Spirit in our lives.

Hold on to the good. An active reaching and seeking for good is a constant reality. The Christian life is not a passive acceptance of whatever life holds.

Avoid every kind of evil. Paul reminds us of his emphasis on avoiding sexual immorality here, but says also that other kinds of evil should be avoiding.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

The "Teaching Aim" written at the beginning of this Preparation states your goal clearly and concisely: "To help the church measure their lives by qualities of life that please God and bless others." We all need this basic but important lesson to be re-implanted into our lives once more. This is your opportunity to help that happen.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this session bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Instructions for Lives That Please God

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:14-22

Background Text

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:14-22

Main Idea

Christians are to live so as to please God and bless others.

Question to Explore

What is distinctive about the Christian lifestyle?

Teaching Aim

To help the church measure their lives by qualities of life that please God and bless others.

Connect with Life:

On a white board or large piece of paper, draw the following diagram.

SET APART

Holy = those who have been set apart

Saints = holy ones

Sanctified = process that results from being set apart

Holiness = state of a person's life resulting from being set apart

(Broadman Comments Jan.-Mar. '97, 13 Ready-To-Teach Bible Study Lessons, p. 75).

Discuss the above set of definitions with the group. Help them to see the differences in the concepts of the four words.

Share this: Many people in the world who belong to hierarchal-based Christian denominations, especially Orthodox and Catholic groups, have very different definitions of these words. It is important that we understand what we believe the Bible teaches us about these important words and concepts.

Leader: For the rest of the session, you may wish to stay mostly with the following teaching plan. However, depending on your group, you may prefer to use the Teacher Preparation materials and follow the teachings of the scripture passage more closely verse-by-verse.

Guide the Study:

Discuss with the group what it means to please God.

Add: What does it mean to please our parents, our friends, our employer?

Now raise the question: How does that relate to or differ from pleasing God.

Encourage dialog on these points:

How important is the overarching desire “to please God”?

How would that help in decision-making.

Discuss the area of sexual purity following ideas and concepts in the **Teacher Preparation** materials.

A home church is a very personal and intimate environment and it is possible that sharing could occur which would be deep and of great confidentiality. Be very sensitive if that should occur. Also be careful that a kind of “talk show” mentality of each person telling a bigger “sin” than another not be allowed to develop. Be sensitive as well to the presence of children or youth.

Ask for definitions on what is called an “accountability” partner.

Now discuss with the group what that idea might look like for Christians like themselves.

Ask what areas of their lives they might want to share with an accountability partner.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the session by and for themselves.

Emphasize the positive aspects of “self-control” and “purity”.

Have a large sheet of paper or white board for listing the many pieces of counsel which Paul gives the Thessalonians. Or make copies of the printed list as it is provided at the end of this session so that each participant has a copy.

These include:

- Have brotherly love
- Live a quiet life
- Mind your own business
- Work with your hands
- Warn those who are idle
- Encourage the timid
- Help the weak, Be patient with everyone
- Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong
- Be kind
- Be joyful
- Pray continually
- Give thanks in all situations
- Do not put out the Spirit’s fire
- Don’t treat prophecies with contempt
- Test everything
- Hold on to the good
- Avoid every kind of evil

Ask each participant to choose five of the most important. Discuss.

Comment: Paul does not intend for us to try to choose the most important. Each of these characteristics form what it means to “please God”. We may think of other

important elements as well, but for today our thoughts are directed to these actions/attitudes which demonstrate the inner change God has made in our lives.

Close the session by asking someone to lead in prayer.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Instructions for Lives That Please God **1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:14-22**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Ask for copies of the list to be used by the adults in the "Encourage Application" section for each of you to use. Give time for discussing various of the aspects. How would "live a quiet life" be different for a teen than it might be for an adult?

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Instructions for Lives That Please God*****1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:14-22****Beginning the Service:**

Sing “Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart”, The Worship Hymnal, #578.

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

One of the strategies used in reaching the urban Hausa in Nigeria has been sports evangelism. Because of the popularity of “futbol” (soccer), it is easy to find teams who want to play. The first game is just a friendly match. Then a second match is arranged, at which time the gospel is shared using a colored evangelism soccer ball. A team member shares a brief testimony at half time. After the game, each player is given a cassette tape in Hausa which presents the gospel beginning with Creation and continuing through Christ’s ascension. Pray that God will draw these young men to Christ.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

To Please God**Introduction:**

2 Thessalonians 5:23-24 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

We have completed a study in which we have examined a number of ways to please God. Our list was long (Read only a few of the items).

Have brotherly love
Live a quiet life
Mind your own business
Work with your hands
Warn those who are idle
Encourage the timid
Help the weak, Be patient with everyone
Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong
Be kind
Be joyful
Pray continually
Give thanks in all situations
Do not put out the Spirit's fire
Don't treat prophecies with contempt
Test everything
Hold on to the good
Avoid every kind of evil

We are glad to have specific instructions about how to live a life pleasing to God. At the same time we may feel overwhelmed by the number and scope of things Paul outlined in this passage. Is there a certain percentage of these things that we must do to please God? Do we have to do all of them – all of the time?

Paul's final words in this chapter indicate that we are not to expect to live a life pleasing to God through our own initiative. Who will help us? God himself, the God of peace.

That God of peace will sanctify us through and through. Sanctification is a big word and poorly understood in Christian life. We may understand it better if we think of it as a process of growth by which we become more like Jesus. It is a life-long process; we don't become sanctified after believing in Christ for a certain number of days or years. It does take our commitment; it is our will transformed by and committed to Christ. Yet it is a process in which God's power through his holy spirit is continually at work.

Let's look at our list of ways to please God.

Be patient with everyone is one of the things Paul indicated we should do. Can we do that alone? If you are a mother, a teacher, an employer, or a grocery store clerk, you probably replied, "Not likely, not if you knew what I have to put up with".

We are also admonished to “avoid every kind of evil”. Again, we are faced regularly with temptations to slack on our work, listen to gossip, watch an inappropriate vulgar movie, have jealousy in our life or covet our neighbor’s new car. Only with the strength of God himself can we avoid evil.

Paul says that our whole spirit, soul and body should be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. All of our being – our personality, our faith life, our physical body – is to be pleasing to God. That would mean that even the things we eat need to be part of our pleasing God.

Impossible, we say. And it certainly is if we depend upon our own ability and strength to accomplish the task. But Paul clearly says we are not in this alone. “The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

Paul states it in a different way in 2 Corinthians 4: 7-10 ***“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”***

A familiar verse from 1 John 4:4 says ***“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”*** The daily temptations are of the world, but God in us is greater than those temptations.

The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

How to please God?

Call to Commitment:

Be aware of the many elements of a life pleasing to God. Paul’s list in 1 Thessalonians is only a part of that teaching. And know that you cannot do it alone. God in us is the hope of victory. ***“This is love for God; to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. The is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”*** 1 John 5: 3-5.

There exists a world of joy for those who follow Christ. Yet, that joy comes only with the commitment to follow all of Christ’s commandments for our lives and to do so with total effort to do so, every day of our lives.

Concluding the Service:

Sing, "I Love You, Lord"

List of qualities which are pleasing to God (Use in the application section of the Bible Study period).

Have brotherly love

Live a quiet life

Mind your own business

Work with your hands

Warn those who are idle

Encourage the timid

Help the weak, Be patient with everyone

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong

Be kind

Be joyful

Pray continually

Give thanks in all situations

Do not put out the Spirit's fire

Don't treat prophecies with contempt

Test everything

Hold on to the good

Avoid every kind of evil