**Community Group Discussion Guide**

**1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**

**Sermon Overview**: This sermon will emphasize a life pleasing to God. Pastor Aaron will call us to instructions for our sanctification. Two major themes will be holiness and honor.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12*

*Set the Context…*

**Context**: After offering a benediction and prayer for the church at Thessalonica to be holy, Paul will now charge them in what holiness is to look like. This portion of the book moves into practical instructions for sanctification. Despite initial fears that Paul had (1 Thess. 3:5), the Thessalonians continued in **faith and love** (1 Thess. 3:6) to follow the will of the Lord. But Paul would exhort them to **do so more and more** (1 Thess. 4:1b). To no surprise, the Gentiles around them had been living worldly lives in that they were committing all sorts of sexually immoral acts and defiling their bodies through their lusts. They would do so because they did **not know God**. But Paul was confident to call the Thessalonians to purity (v. 7), for they knew the Lord. Paul will also address the issue of laziness and the call honor one another as we await the return of Christ.

**Commentary:** Believers cannot forget about the daily battle against temptation, or they can certainly fall prey to the attacks of the devil. Sanctification is a daily battle empowered by grace. Paul makes it clear that **the will of God** was the Thessalonian’s (and all Christian’s) sanctification. The primary area of life given is that they **abstain from sexual immorality** (v. 3). Bringing one’s body into submission through self-control in holiness and honor. Paul contends that the root of sexual sin is “**the passion of lust”** (v.5) and says that those who continuously commit sexual sin are proving to be more “**like the gentiles that do not know God.”** Paul was confident that the church of the Thessalonians knew God intimately. They were believers who had “**not been called for impurity, but in holiness.”** (v.7) Because of their position, Paul charged them to not defraud, exploit, or cheat a fellow Christian through sexual sin. God does not take any sin lightly, and neither should they. About these things Paul had told them **beforehand** (v. 6). God is not idle to the sin of his covenant people; he will purge the evils in his people’s hearts for **the Lord is an avenger in all these things** (v. 6). In understanding these truths and yet still choosing to **disregard this, disregards not man but God** (v. 8).

 Paul shifts focus briefly on brotherly love. The brief commentary isn’t because brotherly love is “not important” but mainly because the Thessalonians were excelling in their care for one another. This, like the previous charge, he would ask them to **do this more and more** (v. 10b). There is no point in which one becomes too Christ-centered that they would attain to “some level of holiness” and so graduate from our need of Christ.

 Apparently, the Thessalonians had picked up on some troubling theology about the return of Jesus Christ. Instead of this causing them to wait for the second coming of Christ with eagerness, working hard to be found pleasing to him, they had begun to be lazy and burdensome to their neighbors as liabilities. So, Paul instructs them “**to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands**.” (v.11) All of this so that as believers we “**may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one**.” (v.12) The second coming of Christ should instruct us to walk in a way that is pleasing to God.

*Share main truths of the passage along with verses that teach them* and discuss how to apply to our daily lives …

**Key Points**:
God’s Will in Salvation and sanctification (v.1-4)
Guarding against sexual sin (v.4-8)
Increasing in love and working with our hands (v.9-12)

**Discussion and Application Questions:**

Verses 1-4

1. Think about those whom you have encouraged to continue to persevere in their faith. How can we continue to encourage ourselves and others to walk and to please God?
2. How do we know the will of God for our lives? What moves us to submit to his will?
3. In this time of quarantine, how can we encourage one another to follow Jesus more and more?
4. Has this time in quarantine helped or hindered God’s will in your sanctification? If helped, share. If hindered, share.

Verses 4-8

1. How does having an intimate knowledge of God through Jesus change the way we think about sexual sin?
2. How should being adopted into God’s family instruct the way we do ministry and share God’s truth with others?
3. What does isolation and idle time do to sexual temptation? How can we avoid this?
4. How does the gospel free us to invite community and discipleship into our lives to help us in areas of sexual sin?
5. Verse 6 warns that God is an avenger against sexual sin. In what way should this drive us closer to him instead of further?
6. Why must God’s people stay on guard against sexual immorality and such impurities?

Verses 9-12

1. How can we follow the example of the Thessalonians in brotherly love and do so more and more?
2. What are some practical things we can do to share brotherly love for our neighborhoods during this quarantine?
3. In light of the return of the Lord Jesus, why is it important to guard against laziness?
4. How can we redeem our view of the calling of work to be diligent in our jobs?
5. How can we live “quietly” minding our own affairs in a social media world?

*Share a key take away or challenge for the week…*

*Pray together in light of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12…*

**Prayer Guide:**

Pray for our church that we would be sanctified in the truth of God’s word. Pray that we would battle for sexual purity and that God would bring to light all hidden immorality for the purpose of healing. Pray that we would be a gracious culture where people can work through sexual brokenness in the gospel.

Pray for our city that those who don’t know God would come to know him. Pray that the sexual brokenness in our city that leads to human trafficking, abuse, and other evils against the body would be changed by the power of the Lord. Pray that God would positively impact unemployment and grant opportunities for able-bodied people to work.

Pray for our world that God would supply the persecuted church with the grace to walk in the will of God and live like Jesus before “outsiders”. Pray that those who persecute the church would be deeply impacted by their example and listen to their message of the gospel.