

CLOSER LOOK



A LIFEGROUP STUDY ON THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

Not Without Hope
Live a Quiet Life, Mind Your Own Business and Work Hard
1 Thessalonians 4:9-12
January 29, 2022

Opening prayer: Father God, we worship you for all that you are. You generously provide us with Your endless love and immeasurable grace. We invite Your Holy Spirit to quiet our minds now so we can hear the message from Your Holy Word. Amen.

MAIN POINT

As a testimony to those who don't have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, believers must be diligent to cultivate mutual love and honor for the brethren, lead a quiet life, mind their own business and be self-supporting from their work.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most impressive thing you've ever made with your hands?

What do you think it means to lead a "quiet" life? Is this the kind of life that is popular in our culture?

As Christians, we ought to approach everyday life with the end in mind. Our mission is to share the gospel of Christ as commanded in Matthew 28:18-20, and it should define our daily lives. In doing so, we will become more like Christ and give ourselves over to His ambitions and not our own. In the passage below, we see that Paul's life is a well documented example from which we may learn.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer or volunteers read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10.

Compare verse 9 to John 13:34-35 and Romans 12:10-18. What does it mean that these believers had been taught by God to love one another?

In verse 10, Paul urged the Thessalonians to excel still more in brotherly love. What was Paul's motive in pointing this out to the church?

What are some ways that we can show love to our brothers and sisters in Christ on a daily basis?

On his second missionary journey, Paul stopped at a synagogue in Thessalonica to preach about Jesus' love for them and His imperatives for their lives. He also preached the gospel to the Gentiles. Contrary to what seems to be three weeks of teaching to the brand new believers in Thessalonian church (Acts 17:2), Paul and Silas likely spent at least a few months there. That said, God allotted Paul just enough time with this young church to teach them in the ways of the Christian life. This passage of his follow-up letter encourages the church to continue demonstrating brotherly love toward one another—the same kind of love that Paul both showed them and shared with them in the person of Jesus Christ.

Have a volunteer or volunteers read 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.

In verse 11a, Paul tells them to aspire to live quietly. How could the Thessalonians live quietly but actively in the church? How can we?

Dean said concerning “volume: there’s a connection between your quiet life and God’s loud love.” What does this mean? What does this connection look like for us?

Paul highlights the quiet living concept and instructs the brethren to “mind their own affairs.” Based upon that instruction, Dean urged us to remain connected only to God’s story. What does this look like practically, for us in 2023? How can we participate in people’s lives while also “minding our own business?”

What does Paul mean when he said to work with your own hands? Why do you think Paul said this?

God created us for work (Genesis 2:15), but that work was cursed because of the fall (Genesis 3:17a, b). Why do you think that is?

How would “working with your hands” demonstrate love for and benefit other believers?

Why is the life we lead before unbelievers important to God?

Finally, why does Paul, in three verses, implore us to love one another more, excel still more, live quietly, mind your own business and work with your hands? Why does this matter?

Paul shared three imperatives with the Thessalonians for how to walk properly with outsiders. First, to lead a quiet life, second, to mind their own business and third, to work with their hands. This, Paul said, would result in exemplary behavior for the benefit of the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles in the city. Paul was also concerned that any idleness among them would burden the brethren. Paul knew what it meant to work hard and with his hands. The Philippian church sent Paul & Silas a financial gift on 2 separate occasions (Philippians 4:16-17). And, Paul and Silas worked as “tentmakers” while there to remind the church that they worked not to burden the church with their needs but to offer themselves as an example of Godly living to the church (2 Thessalonians 3).

Paul’s words in this letter provide us with a model for committed behavior to live for Christ in our church family. We should teach and encourage each other to excel more and more as an example of the love of Christ and commitment to our sanctification. The Christian life is dynamic, always in motion...until the day we arrive at our eternal home.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scriptures apply directly to their lives.

What does it look like to be actively involved in fellowship (Acts 2:42) and yet teach, correct, encourage and rebuke all the while still minding your own business?

Take into consideration your response to the question above. Perhaps you struggle with apathy, restlessness, meddling and idleness. What steps might you take to change?

How do you exemplify Godly living with Christ like attitudes in places where you are among unbelievers? If you currently work, how is this going for you? If you believe change is necessary, what steps would you take? What do these verses teach you about God's will for your life?

LP PRAYER POINTS

Here is the Luke 10 | 02 Missions Prayer Prompt for this week.

*Pray for the team of 10 in Uganda, serving with our partners there.

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit would prepare the hearts of the people in Uganda to be blessed through the team and for the lost to respond to the gospel.
2. Pray that the team will experience safe travel and health while on the trip and that God will give peace to their families and protect and provide for them during this time.
3. Pray that the team members will be wise and discerning and filled with love for those they will serve. Pray also that the team will be flexible and discern what God wants to accomplish and be completely obedient to His will.
4. Pray for the partner church, pastor, Kakira Carepoint staff and caretakers to be strong, faithful, and succeed in fulfilling God's mission in their context.

Family Ministry

* Please pray for protection for our kids, students, and their families as they head back to school. Please pray for our teachers and administrators. Please ask the Lord to protect them physically as there is much sickness going around. Please pray for spiritual protection as well.

* Please pray for our Kids, Students, and 1825 Leaders. Please pray for spiritual momentum in their lives, as well as energy, zeal, and encouragement as they faithfully serve and lead. Please pray that they would continue to grow in their walk with the Lord, maturity in Christ, and in their dependence on Him. Please pray for godly wisdom as they pour into young people.

PRAYER REQUESTS

*Take a moment to ask your group if there are any prayer requests.

PRAY WITH YOUR GROUP

Pray over your group's prayer requests, along with the following prayer:

God, we want to be your mouthpiece to our unbelieving family, friends, coworkers, and the world in general. We pray that we would hear these words and be mindful of what our life looks like to the watching world. Sanctify us God. Help us to grow more in love with You and for the brethren.

LP REMINDERS

- February 12 - Starting Point
- February 12 - Lifepoint Students Super Bowl Party
- February 19 - CORE
- February 26 - Baptisms
- February 26 - Discovering Life
- February 26 - Jumpback Training

MEMORIZE

"But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need." (1 Thessalonians 4:10-12)

COMMENTARY

**** (Bible Knowledge Commentary (2 Vols.)) Acts 17:2.**

[Regarding length of time Paul was in Thessalonica] The reference to three Sabbath days does not mean the missionary band stayed only three weeks in Thessalonica. Paul carried on the work with a Jewish emphasis for three Sabbaths and then turned to Gentiles and ministered to them for some weeks after that. This was the situation for three reasons: (1) The Philippian church sent money to Paul at least twice during this visit (Phil. 4:15-16), implying a longer lapse of time than three weeks. (2) In addition, Paul supported himself by manual labor (1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:7-10). This may indicate that considerable time elapsed before the aid from Philippi arrived. (3) Most of the converts at Thessalonica were not from the synagogue but were Gentiles steeped in idolatry (cf. 1 Thes. 1:9).

**** (Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary) 1 Thess 4:9–5:11: Responses to questions.**

Paul next appears to answer a series of questions put to him by the Thessalonians (see 4:9, 13; 5:1; cf. 1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1), communicated orally or more likely by letter sent via Timothy. Likely the Thessalonians took advantage of the messenger at hand (there was no public postal system during this era). The questions they put to Paul were about fraternal love (4:9–10), the destiny of the dead in Christ (4:13–18), and the time of the day of the Lord (5:1–11).

If 4:9 is indeed a response to a query about familial love among the believers, what would have provoked the question? Perhaps the question arose from tensions generated by sexual misconduct, problems in accepting the emerging leadership (1 Thess. 5:12–13), and

the way some refused to work (5:14). The social rejection the church experienced made the issue all the more important (2:14). Families, the fundamental unit of society, were affected by these believers who turned from community and familial deities (1:9). Building family bonds in the church similar to those that exist between brothers and sisters therefore became an urgent necessity.

**** (Bible Knowledge Commentary (2 Vols.)) 3. Brotherly Love (4:9-12) 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12**

The second specific exhortation regarding Christian living accentuates the positive. Though sexual impurity is a danger to be avoided (vv. 3-8), loving other Christians is a practice to be cultivated. Both deal with the general subject of loving one's neighbor as himself, the basic horizontal aspect of Christian living.

4:9.

Some instructions for Christians come through their brethren in Christ. But other lessons are taught by God to His children directly, things that almost intuitively seem right for a Christian to do. Loving other Christians is such a lesson. Christians quickly learn that there is a real kinship between believers, and they relate to other Christians in a way they do not relate to those outside God's family. The Thessalonians had already learned to love each other even though they were new Christians. Paul pointed out that God Himself had taught them this.

4:10.

Paul did not need to write and tell them to love one another, but he did need to write and urge them to do this more and more (cf. v. 1). The evidence that they had learned the lesson of brotherly love was their deep, selfless, giving affection for Christians in other parts of their province of Macedonia. These were their neighbors in Philippi, Berea, and perhaps other towns where Christians lived. Paul commended believers for their love when he wrote the churches (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1-5). Yet there was still room for improvement, perhaps in the persistence and consistency of their love.

4:11.

Everyday habits of living manifest love of the brethren as do more special demonstrations of affection. It is these habits that Paul suggested the Thessalonians ponder in the light of brotherly love. He suggested these goals as worthy objectives for their maturing love. His words may reflect less than ideal conditions in their church.

First, his readers should lead a restful life. The word translated quiet (*hēsychazein*) means quiet in the sense of restfulness (cf. Acts 22:2; 2 Thes. 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:2, 11), rather than quiet as opposed to talkativeness (*sigāō*; cf. Acts 21:40; 1 Cor. 14:34). The former means "undisturbed, settled, not noisy," while the latter means "silent." Paul was telling the Thessalonians to be less frantic, not less exuberant. A person who is constantly on the move is frequently a bother to other people as well as somewhat distracted from his own walk with God. The latter can lead to the former. But a Christian who strives to be at peace with himself and God will be a source of peace to his brethren. Such quietude constitutes a practical demonstration of love for others.

Second, Paul recommended minding one's own business. The connection with love for the brethren is obvious (cf. Prov. 25:17).

Third, working with one's own hands demonstrates love for the brethren because a self-supporting person is not a burden to others. Paul himself set the example by working with his hands when he was in Thessalonica (1 Thes. 2:9). Too restful a life can be a problem also, and Paul guarded against that with this instruction. This verse dignifies manual labor. The reference also suggests that many, perhaps most, in the church came out of the working class. The Greeks deplored manual labor and relegated it to slaves as much as possible. But the Jews held it in esteem; every Jewish boy was taught a trade regardless of his family's wealth. Work itself is a blessing, and working with one's hands should never be despised by Christians. A man who is willing to work with his hands demonstrates his love for his brethren by being willing to humble himself to provide for his own needs so that he does not depend on others but provides for himself.

4:12.

There are good reasons for these exhortations. Such behavior does win the respect of non-Christians and so glorifies the Christian's God. Love of this kind is appreciated by everyone. Paul placed importance on the testimony of Christians before outsiders, unbelievers. This kind of behavior also wins the respect of Christians; people appreciate those who do not take advantage of them. Paul discouraged

the Thessalonians from expecting financial favors from the brethren simply because they were fellow Christians. Nor was he promoting a fierce spirit of independence; he was not saying that every Christian must become completely self-sufficient. He was advocating personal responsibility, as is clear from the context. This is a manifestation of mature Christian love for the brethren.

**** (Bible Knowledge Commentary (2 Vols.))**

[Regarding John 13:34-35.]

The 11 disciples would survive in His absence by obeying His example of love. The command is new in that it is a special love for other believers based on the sacrificial love of Jesus: As I have loved you, so you must love one another. Christians' love and support for one another enable them to survive in a hostile world. As Jesus was the embodiment of God's love, so now each disciple should embody Christ's love. This love is a sign to the world as well as to every believer (1 John 3:14).

**** (John Piper's Sermons (over 1200 sermons))**

4. The Aim of Excelling Still More 1 Thess 4:1, 9-12

Finally, notice that the aim of the requesting and exhorting in verse 1 is (at the end of the verse) "that you may excel still more and more." In what? In what you "received" from the beginning. Not in a long list of new commandments. You received (what Paul calls in Romans 6:17) the "form of teaching"—the "how you ought to walk and please God." You received the terms of the covenant. That is what I urge you to walk in still more and more. Yes, it is God who teaches you (v. 9). But he uses words spoken by men. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6). Humans "request" and humans "exhort" but God writes the terms of the covenant on the heart. God gives the heartfelt obedience.

So here we have a model for how to use our church covenant (among other ways) in our small groups. First, we acknowledge that there is a way to walk and to please God. Second, we receive it—we accept the covenant and make our commitment to one another with it. Third, we "request" and "exhort" each other again and again. We don't coast. We keep the covenant before us and stir each other up. Fourth, we do this not just for the weak but also for the strong, not just for the wayward but also for the stalwarts, not just for the failing but also for the successful, not just for the cold but also for the fervent, not just for the laymen but also for the pastors. We exhort each other day after day to "excel still more."

No one is above sinning and covenant breaking. And the best protection against it is not coasting or even commending. The best protection is stretching forward. This is why Paul requested and exhorted successful saints to "excel more and more" in love and holiness.

**** 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 (Expositor's Bible Commentary: Abridged Edition (2 Volumes))**

3. Filial love (4:9-10)

9-10 "Now about" is a frequent Pauline formula for introducing a new subject (4:13; 5:1; cf. 1Co 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12). Paul is now responding to a different element of Timothy's oral report about Thessalonica (1Th 3:6). In vv.9-10a he acknowledges their practical compliance with a responsibility to love each other. This "brotherly love" presupposes the close ties within the spiritual family of God. Paul views further writing on the subject as superfluous in that they are "taught by God" through the indwelling Holy Spirit (v.8; cf. Jn 6:45) to so love. At conversion, believers become lifelong pupils as the Spirit bears inner witness to the love within the Christian family (cf. Ro 5:5; Gal 5:22). No external stimulus is necessary; mutual love among Christians is an inbred quality.

Proof of this inner instruction was visible in the Thessalonians' love for all Christians of their province. Any contacts they had with churches in Berea and Philippi are unknown except for the implications of these verses. Groups of believers had possibly sprung up in other parts of the province since the beginning of Paul's Macedonian mission (Ac 16:9-12). With some allowance for Paul's hyperbolic "all," it is safe to assume that a goodly proportion of the believers in the province had been touched by the Thessalonians' unselfish concern. Otherwise, the missionary zeal reflected in 1:8 lacks clear substantiation.

As exemplary as the Thessalonians had been (1:3; 3:6), however, further progress remained a goal for them (3:12). Paul repeats and particularizes v.1 in the expression, "we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more." More love is always possible for Christians because the ultimate example of Christ himself (Jn 13:34; 15:12) is infinite and can only be approached, never fully reached.

4. Individual independence (4:11-12)

These verses stand in close grammatical connection with v.10b. Yet the logical connection is not immediately obvious. From the subject of love, Paul changes to something quite different--namely, the importance of industry and individual responsibility in Christian living. The two are not completely unrelated. Nothing disrupts the peace of a Christian community more than the unwillingness of members to shoulder their part of the responsibility for it. To disturb tranquility violates the love that permeates a truly Christian community. More specifically, some members of the Thessalonian church appear to have taken advantage of the liberality of other Macedonian Christians (cf. 2Co 8:1-5) in accepting financial help while making no effort at self-support, a condition that later grew worse (2Th 3:6-15).

We do not know the reason for this idleness. But since these two letters are so strongly eschatological, it is probable that the condition stemmed from their misapplying truths about the Lord's return to their daily living. Christians must never evade their daily responsibilities under the pretense of preparing for Christ's return. To do so is to distort this great hope.

11 That restlessness may have been a problem for the Thessalonians is implied by Paul's exhortation--"make it your ambition to lead a quiet life." His exhortation to "mind your own business" implies that the meddlesome spirit that often goes with restlessness was troubling them. Busybodies were active (2Th 3:11) and needed a reprimand. But Paul means more than telling them to stay out of other people's affairs; he also wants them to keep their own affairs in order. A third exhortation, "work with your hands," suggests that idleness was likely a problem among the Thessalonians. In a Greek culture that degraded manual labor, Christianity joined with Judaism in viewing work as an honorable pursuit. Most of the Thessalonian believers earned their living with their hands. Paul tells them to continue supporting themselves and thus avoid the pitfalls of idleness.

12 These exhortations find a twofold purpose. (1) The Thessalonians will "win the respect of outsiders," i.e., those who have no connection with Christ and hence are outside the family of God. Such people readily recognize proper conduct and are repelled by those who do not carry their share of social responsibility. (2) They will not "be dependent on anybody." Of course, independence in an absolute sense is neither possible nor even desirable. We must understand Paul's admonitions not to be dependent in the light of the situation described in this section.

**** (ESV Study Bible Notes) 4:9–12**

Paul urges the Thessalonians to continue showing brotherly love and to be financially self-supporting. Some in the church have abandoned gainful employment and are living off the charity of wealthier Christians (see 2 Thess. 3:6–15). It is unclear whether or not this problem was related to the Thessalonians' confusion about the end times.

4:9 taught by God to love one another. Jeremiah 31:33–34 prophesied that God would write his law on the hearts of his people and directly teach them as part of the new covenant. Christians already know this reality (1 John 2:27): by love they fulfill the law (Rom. 13:8–10; cf. Lev. 19:18; John 13:34).

4:11 live quietly. Live peaceably with others (see 2 Thess. 3:11–12), instead of meddling in others' affairs. work with your hands. Paul calls on Thessalonian believers to earn their own living rather than to depend on wealthier Christians, as Paul had instructed them when he was at Thessalonica.

4:12 walk properly before outsiders. For some Christians to be shamelessly exploiting the charity of wealthier Christians would have been disgraceful in a first-century Greco-Roman environment.