

Ready for Christ's Return | Part 5

Lesson 1

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

October 8, 2023

Living in Purity in a Sex-Crazy Culture

INTRODUCTION

Paul's letters to churches and individuals often touch on numerous topics because he is trying to cover a lot of ground in giving direction, advice, and knowledge to the rapidly growing church. New issues keep coming up as Christianity spreads to other cultures. (Perhaps parallel our time as the culture keeps changing.)

In these 12 verses, Paul has three sections: encouragement to live to please God; instruction that we should be sanctified avoiding sexual immorality; and finally, direction on how we relate to others inside the church (with love) and outside the church (quietly as to earn respect and avoid dependence).

Some of us may think Paul would be caught off guard by today's "sex-crazy culture" but ancient Greece had a long tradition of behaviors that would be scandalous even today. Yet Paul's writing here and elsewhere calls for purity and self-control. Let's see what the scripture he wrote says.

Memory verse: "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."—1 Thessalonians 4:7

Pray, and read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12. What questions or observations do you have about this passage?

OBSERVATION: What do the passages say?

1. What correct behaviors are the Thessalonians exhibiting? (1 Thessalonians 4:1a, 9-10a)
2. In Paul's opinion, is that behavior good enough for God? (1 Thessalonians 4:1b, 10b)
3. What behaviors we should avoid? What behaviors should we exhibit? (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)
4. What is the downside of ignoring this instruction? (1 Thessalonians 4:6b)
5. List the ways we are to relate to those outside of the church. (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)

INTERPRETATION: What do the passages mean?

1. Living to please God and loving God's family are noted in 1 Thessalonians 4:1, 9, and 10a. What do these actions look like? (Micah 6:6-8; John 13:34-35; 1 Thessalonians 2:12)
2. How is sexual immorality described in the Bible? (Matthew 5:27-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9-18; Ephesians 5:3)
3. Sexual immorality is related to other bad behaviors (read sin). What is a primary cause of sexual immorality? (Galatians 5:17-21)

4. What causes good behavior? (Galatians 5:16, 22-25;
1 Thessalonians 4:4)

5. How might we both follow the Lord and lead the “quiet
life” that “may win the respect of outsiders”
(1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)? (Matthew 5:14-16;
Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 2:11-17, 3:13-15)

APPLICATION: How do the passages apply to your life?

1. Think about how seriously God views immorality as shown in these passages. Pray for yourself and those around you to avoid these thoughts and behaviors (Matthew 5:27-28), and know that God provides instruction and means to avoid and/or escape.
2. How might you be more supportive and show the love Christ described (John 13:34-35) toward other followers of Jesus?
3. Consider where you already live the “quiet life” that “may win the respect of outsiders” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). How could you do better without conforming to the world?