



WINTER 2023 // WEEK 4

Life Group Questions

A People of Hope // February 4/5, 2023

A More Wonderful Way to Walk // 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Introduction

After clearly expressing his heartfelt care for the church in Thessalonica, Paul leans in to urge them to pursue a holy and righteous life. His message to uphold purity in a sin-soaked culture is just as important for us today. And it is a *wonderful* way of life that God offers us!

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Due to preferences over a wide range of groups, we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) When was the last time you laughed until you cried? Share the funny details around that story.

- 2) If you could create a new national holiday, what would it be?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you

 - 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.
-

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) What example or idea has really stuck with you from the sermon this week?

- 2) Paul repeats the phrase “excel even more” twice in this short passage (vs 1 & 10). **How does this phrase show that our earthly journey is not a place of arrival but a process of growth?**

Where do you see that kind of growth happening in your life?

- 3) Pastor Jeff encouraged us that turning away from sin is more than a matter of simply stopping a behavior, but requires we *supplant* it. **Describe in your own words what it means to supplant a sinful behavior.**

Recall what was said in the sermon about simple prayers as a first step in supplanting a sinful behavior.

Is there a particular one of those prayers that relates well to your struggles? Or might you have a prayer of your own? Write it down, and if you are willing, share it with your group. (It might even be a good idea to write it on a notecard to carry with you this week.)

- 4) A repeated theme in 1 Thessalonians (3:13, 4:3, 4:4, 4:7) is the translation of various forms of the word *hagios* (holiness / sanctification). Over and over Paul emphasizes this idea of being “other than” or being “set apart” for God. **How would you describe the idea of holiness/sanctification or being “set apart”?**

Pastor Jeff quoted C. S. Lewis, "...We are far too easily pleased" indicating that we often seem to think of holiness as a restricting or negative command to limit our freedom and rob our life of fun. But in reality, our view reflects how little we understand the goodness of God and what He has won for us on the cross. (Google the entire C. S. Lewis quote if you are interested in discussing it.) **What would it look like for you to cultivate a greater vision of what God offers you in Himself?**

1 Thessalonians 4:8 mentions that God has given his Holy Spirit to followers of Jesus. **How can the Holy Spirit help us to be set free from sin and experience more of the wonderful walk God has called us to?** (Check out Galatians 5:16-25, also The Message paraphrase of this passage is beautiful!)

5) Notice in verse 11 what Paul says our ambitions in life should be pointed toward. **What does he say is the purpose and end result of living this way?**

What changes or adjustment would you need to make in order to be ambitious about the things Paul promotes?

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

Prayer Focus: Pastor Jeff reminded us that our desires come from our beliefs. When we believe that God wants the best for us, our desire for purity aligns with His.

1. Pray with openness, asking God to reveal your motives.
2. Consider carefully, “Am I becoming the kind of person who puts the needs of others above my own desires?” Then confess those times when you have been selfish.

Scripture Focus: God uses His Word and His Spirit to teach us to love one another. Spend time this week reading *John 14:26-28* to be reminded of the work of the Holy Spirit that brings peace and understanding. You might even want to encourage the members of your group by sharing this passage over email or text throughout the week.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?