

GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Pleasing God: Walking Properly

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- April 26- Parent Info Meeting for Camp (Kids)
- April 26- Worship Night @ 5 pm
- May 2- Gather (Women)

Check out the TJC Weekend Recap podcast for a more in-depth look at our sermons each week!

The podcast is available on all streaming platforms!

Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, 10 for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, 11 and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 12 so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

Introduction:

Some of my earliest memories as a kid are of my dad putting on long-johns super early in the morning to prepare to go work on a job site in the cold all day. He did it for decades. Through his labors each day, he built homes for families, buildings for businesses, and provided for us (his own family). This never showed up in newspapers, documentaries, or books. It may not make headlines or grow a social media platform. But it pleases God. In fact, it makes up the foundation blocks of a life that Scripture calls "walking properly."

Many of us think we need to do these heroic spiritual feats in order to please God with our lives. We think we have to read through the Bible in a year, study thick theology books, fast so many days, memorize so many passages, go overseas so many times, share our faith 5x per day, commit every extra hour of our week to serving in the church, or any other number of things (that could be a good thing) that we elevate as these pinnacle activities that make God truly happy with us. But what if God is pleased with the ordinary? What if the things that pleased God were far simpler than we imagine?

Scripture Exegesis: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

The premise of this section of Scripture is the call to please God. He wants the Christians in Thessalonica to live lives that please the Lord. This story gets even cooler when you understand the context and situation of how these believers came to faith.

Acts 17:1-9 -- Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 5 But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring

them out to the crowd. 6 And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8 And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

So Paul goes in and starts telling about Jesus and people are coming to faith, Greeks and Jews. But a contingent of Jews start causing major problems and stirring up a mob against Paul and others. So Paul and some of his traveling companions leave that night. And Paul is left not knowing the state of where the new believers are. Are they still in the faith? Have they turned back? He gets words they not only are still in the faith, but they are thriving. And this letter is his instructions to them (from a distance) to encourage them in the faith and ground them in the truth.

So in 1 Thessalonians 4, he is instructing them in how to live to please God. How to encourage them to keep doing what they are doing, more and more. He says that God's will for them is their sanctification. He then outlines the sins to avoid in order to walk in holiness. Now he's going to add positive things to pro-actively think about. They have been told to "put off" and now here is what they are to "put on."

vs 9-10 --

1. Love one another (yes all, but particularly the saints): remember Jesus summarizes all of the law and prophets with "love God and love your neighbor." And Jesus goes on to say that the world will know that we belong to Him by our love for one another. Paul continues that line of teaching instructing the church in Thessalonica to love one another. That isn't a vibe or abstract idea. Love for one another looks like bearing burdens, praying, fellowshiping together, sharpening one another, growing in grace and knowledge together, meeting needs for one another. Love is active.

i. You're doing it "more and more": keep striving, don't grow weary in doing it.

vs 11-12 --

2. Aspire to live quietly:

i. Minding your own affairs (not busybodies, gossip, don't be nosy): This is a call against meddlesomeness. In Thessalonica, some had stopped working (likely due to a warped eschatology, thinking Jesus was returning any minute, so why work?), which left them with idle hands and time to gossip or interfere in others' lives. Pleasing God means staying in your lane and tending to the responsibilities He gave you, rather than trying to manage everyone else's.

ii. Work with your own hands (they've already been instructed on this): Manual labor was despised by the Greco-Roman elite. It was seen as suitable only for slaves. Paul elevates it. He uses the verb *ergazesthai* which means to work, to produce, to earn. By instructing them to work with their hands, he is validating the dignity of labor. Martin Luther once said that the Christian milkmaid, milking her cow for the glory of God, is just as holy as the pastor in the pulpit.

***So that you can walk properly to those outside the church:** To behave decently, to follow standards. Lazy Christians bring the Gospel into disrepute. If we claim a high God but live low lives of dependency and sloth, we blaspheme. Hard work adorns the doctrine of God.

***Dependent on no one:** This speaks to having enough to meet your own needs so you don't burden the church or the world. But note the context of 2 Thessalonians 3 and Ephesians 4:28: we work not just to eat, but to have something to share with the needy. Work is the engine of generosity. You can't love your neighbor if you are a burden to him.

In Thessalonica, misunderstanding about the Second Coming had bred agitation. Some believers had stopped working, assuming the end was immediately at hand. Without the daily structure of work, they became idle busybodies meddling in other people's affairs. Paul counters this. He tells them to aspire to live quietly. This quietness is not passivity. It is a deliberate, active choice to settle down. It breaks down into a rhythm of faithful stewardship.

And remember, what is the context of this all: pleasing God. This pleases God.

****Work is Not a Curse. It's a Calling.** Too many Christians think work is part of the Fall. It isn't. Work precedes the Fall. Adam was placed in the garden to "work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). The curse made work *toilsome*, but it didn't create work. When we work faithfully, we are imaging God who is ever-active. When you are on the job site, in the shop, or at the desk, you are engaged in a priestly duty. Pleasing God doesn't stop when you leave the church building on Sunday. It happens when you do honest work on Tuesday.

All work, not just church work, is spiritual according to the Bible. Whether plumbers, IT support, welders, landscape companies, barbers, salesmen, or other types of everyday jobs, God is interested in our work. Work is good. Work is godly.

Genesis 1:28 -- And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

I have a YouTube channel I started about a month ago that talks about these different domains that Christians can honor and serve the Lord. It's called Every Sphere. I talk about the stories of everyday people fulfilling this calling and sharing the theology behind it. (**show Every Sphere icon/logo**)

****Idleness vs. Busyness.** There is a difference between the "quiet life" and just "being busy." We are not to be idle. We are also not to glorify being busy. Being aimlessly busy isn't a badge of honor. Paul calls them to *mind their own affairs*. This is a profound check. We please God in our work. We don't settle for idleness or aimless distraction.

****The Holiness of the Ordinary.** Pleasing God is found in the rhythm of ordinary obedience. It's less about dramatic spiritual experiences or highs and more about every day waking up, loving people in tangible ways, giving yourself to your labors and work, minding your business and not meddling in others affairs. This is just plain ol weekday obedience...and it pleases God.

Application:

How can we leave here today and take practical action, and not just feeling good about hearing a sermon on it?

1. Audit Yourself.

Look at your life this week. How are you doing in these things? Where are you minding your own business, and where are you acting like a backseat driver in other people's affairs? Are you idle or are you engaged in fruitful labor? Focus on yourself and your responsibility.

2. Consecrate Your Labor.

Tomorrow morning, before you clock in, open the laptop, or start your chores, pray a simple prayer: "Lord, I work hard today to bring You glory and please You, serve my neighbor." Start seeing the everydayness of your labor as a stewardship to the Lord.

3. Make Love a Verb.

Prayerfully pick someone this week and find a practical thing you can do to help them. Bear a burden. Pray with someone. Loving the saints is one of the ways we please God. Engage in collective prayer over the next 21 days.

21 Days of More and More: We are starting a 21 Days of Prayer today (worship night tonight). Each day you will follow a prayer prompt in the guide we are making available. We want to be prayerful together and seek the "more and more" God calls us to. (**show a QR code**)

Close:

This short little series in 1 Thessalonians 4 has looked at pleasing God. Do not mistake any of this for a checklist to earn God's love. God is pleased with us if we are in Christ. Through faith in Jesus, we are reconciled to God and have His pleasure.

Because your sins are forgiven, your labor isn't to pay a debt. It's an opportunity to serve the King who already paid it all. We walk in obedience and holiness. We mind our business, avoid idleness, engage in fruitful labor, and in this: we please God.

PRAY

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



Discussion:

Loving One Another – Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:9–10

1: The Quiet Life – Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:11

Question: Why is living a quiet, steady life often undervalued, and how does God view it differently? How is the quiet life counter intuitive of our culture that is always chasing the highs of life?

Leader Note: Challenge the desire for attention and highlight faithfulness.

2: Minding Your Own Affairs – Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:11

Question: One mark of an unhealthy church is a congregation that is filled with gossip & meddling. What caused the church in Thessalonica to be tempted with this? What are some common causes that could lead us to this sort of ungodly behavior in our context at TJC?

Leader Note: In Thessalonica, idleness (likely from misunderstanding Christ's return) led to too much time and misplaced focus. Help connect that to today—idle time, lack of purpose, social media, comparison, and a desire for control often fuel gossip and meddling.

3: The Dignity of Work – Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:11

Question: How does this passage reshape your view of everyday work as something that can please God? An even more challenging question, how do we please God with our work even when our work is not pleasing to us?

*Leader Note: Help them see work as worship, not just necessity. Press into attitude and motive—faithfulness, integrity, and serving the Lord matter more than enjoyment. **Take time to pray for members who are struggling at work.***

4: Your Witness to Outsiders – Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:12

Question: In what ways does your daily life either strengthen or weaken your witness to those outside the church? How important is it to understand that our ungodly actions can be a hindrance to others from seeing God, and more specifically, what does that look like in light of this passage?

Leader Note: Connect lifestyle with gospel credibility. Highlight idleness, dependency, gossip, and lack of integrity in work as behaviors that damage witness, while quiet faithfulness, responsibility, and diligence strengthen it.

5: Dependency vs Responsibility – Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:12

Question: How do we balance not being ashamed to ask for help when we are truly in need, while also pursuing a life of responsibility and diligence so we are not unnecessarily dependent on others? How can a lack of responsibility affect both others and your ability to love them well?

Leader Note: Show the tension—Scripture calls us to both humility (receiving help when needed) and responsibility (working and providing when able). Responsibility fuels generosity, not independence for its own sake.

Pleasing God in the Ordinary – Read: Colossians 3:23

Question: What would change in your daily life if you truly believed that your ordinary, everyday responsibilities were opportunities to please God? Where are you most tempted to overlook God because the moment feels too “mundane”?

Leader Note: Help them see that faithfulness in the ordinary is not lesser—it is the primary place God is honored. Push against the idea that only dramatic or spiritual “high” moments matter.

Closing Prayer: Ask God to open your eyes so you can see Him in the everyday, ordinary responsibilities of life. Ask the Lord to correct our thinking from only looking for Him in the dramatic seasons of our lives, and to receive joy from Him in the holy mundane.

- **BUILD UP | SEND OUT | REAP THE HARVEST**

- How are you making yourself known at church this week?
- How are you growing to know Christ better this week?
- How are you making Christ known this week?

- **PRAYER**

- **Pray over any request from your group members.**
- **Pray for our team:** Timo Serrano, Director of Facility Maintenance
- **Pray for our short-term teams:**
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- **Pray for our long-term units on the mission field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Browns
- **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>