

A Life that Pleases God
1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Introduction: “If it feels good do it.” This phrase basically sums up the cultural view of sex in 21st Century America. How far we have drifted from a biblical view of sex. Our culture is not all that different than the Thessalonian culture; a culture that was very permissive regarding sexual matters. Many forms of extra-marital sex were tolerated and even encouraged in Thessalonica. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Paul addresses this issue and he calls the Thessalonian believers to live differently than the culture around them. He exhorts them to follow God’s will when it comes to sexual matters. May we hear Paul’s challenge and may we to pursue God’s will in sexual matters and therefore live lives that truly please God.

Opening Discussion: Our culture no longer has a biblical view of sex. Agree or disagree? Why?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

1. In verses 4:1-2, it is clear that Paul is reminding the Thessalonians about instructions he had previously communicated to them. Why do you think this might have been necessary to do?
2. What are some of the instructions that Paul reminds them of in these verses?
3. What does it mean that God’s will is our sanctification (v. 3)? What is sanctification?
4. Paul equates our sanctification with abstaining from sexual immorality (v. 3). What is sexual immorality and what does it mean to “abstain” from it?

Brian said:

In 3:13, Paul talked about a state or condition of holiness before God when Jesus returns. *Sanctification* is very similar in meaning [to the word “holiness” in 3:13]; however, here it refers to a process leading to a state of holiness. The NIV’s translation, “you should be sanctified” captures this idea of process. Paul is saying that God’s will is that you be in a process of being more and more formed into the character of God himself. Holiness is defined by God and His character and so sanctification is a process of more and more putting on and sharing God’s character.

5. How can we pursue sanctification?

6. How does involvement in sexual immorality hurt people (v. 6)?

7. How would you summarize what this passage teaches about how a person can live a life that pleases God?

Brian said:

[Some] of you would say that in terms of sexual immorality, you are not acting out with other people, but there are things going on in terms of your thought life that are not right. You know that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught that God is not just concerned with our outward actions, He is concerned even with the life of our minds (Matt. 5:27-28). We are to pursue holiness even to that level. All of our thoughts are to be free of sexual immorality.

I know that this is not easy. We live in a culture in which we are inundated with words and images and thoughts that make holiness in the life of our mind very difficult. Paul would tell us, "Abstain!" Don't allow your minds to be filled with impure things. Be careful about the movies you watch or the books you read. Don't go places on the internet that are impure.

8. How does the media influence our attitudes about sex?

9. Do you believe it is possible that all of your thoughts can be free of sexual immorality? Why or why not?

10. What steps do you think you need to take to have a thought life that is more and more free of sexual immorality?

11. Suppose you have a child or maybe a friend who is moving towards a sexually immoral relationship. They communicate to you that they believe that the biblical view of sexuality is unrealistic and outdated. What would you say to them?

12. What do you sense is the most important step that you should take to continue to pursue sanctification and a life that pleases God?