

PLEASING LOVE

A life pleasing to God expresses itself in sexual PURITY and brotherly LOVE. God is pleased when Christians walk in sexual purity and have genuine love for one another, which is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

This week's message focuses on loving our Christian family.

TODAY'S TEXT – 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-12

1. LOVING OUR FAMILY OF FAITH IS PLEASING TO GOD

- Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-8 & 4:1,9-12

Paul assumes that as believers we will all want to please God. In the beginning of his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul gives them 4 reasons why they should want to please God:

1. They have received God's gracious gift of salvation in the gospel of Christ - when we get what we have been saved from and reconciled to, we cannot help but respond by living a life that pleases God.
2. The Holy Spirit empowers them to - though we fail, and at times are tempted to give up on pursuing a life that is pleasing to God, the Holy Spirit nudges us to get up, and go another round. His life in us propels us to keep going, despite how we feel.
3. The faithful example of others - we are able to see God's transforming power in the life of other believers, which is a powerful encouragement to keep pressing on. It is only God's power at work in them that can cause such change, and that continually reminds us that growth and change is possible.
4. Our own faithful example - others are directly impacted by watching how we live our lives, both believers and non-believers alike. This should encourage us to live lives that they are able to imitate and thus teach them what walking in the Spirit looks like.

Living lives that please God not only happens at an individual level, but also at a community level. Paul likened our love for one another in the church, as brotherly love, which really is a close-knit, unconditional, family kind of love. This means that when we have received God's gift of salvation that we become part of his family, and we treat other believers as such. Therefore, the concept of a "personal/private relationship with Jesus Christ" is not really a representation of biblical Christianity. Our relationship with Christ, though extremely personal, is lived out in community with our new family members. How we love and embrace them reflects how well we understand our new identity as children of God.

As we recognise, receive and rejoice in what Christ has done, by loving our family of faith, we live lives that are pleasing to God.



- ❖ Q: Why is the idea of a private/personal relationship with Christ not quite biblical?
- ❖ Q: Why do you think it is pleasing to God when we authentically and sacrificially love our community of faith?
- ❖ Q: What does Paul mean when he says to love people with a “brotherly” love?

Group Discussion:

- ❖ Q: How well do you think our gospel community does in loving one another like family?
- ❖ Q: What sort of growth do you think we need in this area?
- ❖ Q: How do you think we should view a new person coming into our gospel community?
- ❖ Q: What do you think it would look like for us, practically, to please God in this regard?

2. LOVING OUR FAMILY OF FAITH IS A HALLMARK OF BEING CHRISTIAN

- Read John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:20-21, 1 Thessalonians 4:10, John 13:1-5

Our love for one another, within the church, shows that we are truly Christ-followers. Real love that is motivated by God’s love for us is impossible to fake or sustain, especially since the family of faith is made up of so many different types of people. Naturally, there would be no desire to sacrificially and authentically love the people in our church, but spiritually, we are inspired and empowered to. This love is not an emotion that we feel for God, but is an intentional choice that is demonstrated among our family of faith. Therefore, the notion of “attending” church is foreign to Christianity. Being grafted into the body of Christ means we are now family, and that means being with and part of family; at functions, meals, and whatever else community-life offers. This, of course, comes at a major cost in terms of our comfort levels. Most of us have very little time on our hands, and so committing to family-time, with our church community, means it will be felt. Yet it is what we are called to. It is part of who we are now, and not an optional extra that gives some added value.

Paul commends us to not just remain with the status quo, but to grow in this love even more. This means that we need to get to know people at a deeper level, as well as serve them. Both of these things are avenues to loving people well.

For some of us, just serving in some way is a major step in the right direction. Every single one of us should be serving our local church in some way.

- ❖ Q: Why is being part of a family of faith costly to us?
- ❖ Q: Are you continuing to grow in brotherly love within this gospel community? (Ask yourself how well you know each person in the group, and how much time and energy you have invested to that end? How well do we as a group pull together to meet the needs within our group, and how well do we emotionally and physically support those who need it? Why is it important to celebrate when we are growing in love towards one another?)
- ❖ Q: Why is our serving of the local church an expression of love?





- ❖ *Personal Reflection Q: In what ways are you currently serving our local church/community? (If you are not serving in any capacity, what do you think God is telling you to do right now, and why have you been putting it off?)*

3. LOVING OUR FAMILY OF FAITH IS EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

- Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11

The Holy Spirit is the one who empowers us to love one another, living lives that are pleasing to God. There are 3 things that he helps us to overcome when dealing with our own frustrations with the process:

1. Restlessness – the Spirit enables us to live well-tempered, controlled and quiet lives. We need to ask ourselves what kind of people we are within community, and if we are bringing peace and stability to others, or if we are constantly needy, emotionally draining, unstable and demanding. Loving others has a lot to do with what we bring to the table. This does not mean being perfect, but it does mean being mindful of what others need, and having the desire and ability to be self-controlled and considerate.
 2. Nosiness – we need to find a healthy way of being appropriately involved in one another's lives, without being interfering. We need to find the tension between accountability and privacy.
 3. Laziness – Paul instructs all believers to work (as far as is possible within their abilities), and to contribute to the needs of others. Christians work as unto the Lord, and their earnings are not theirs to use for overindulgence, but to help those within the family of faith who cannot work or who are struggling. In other words, Paul wants us all to do our part, to not be a burden, and to help contribute to others.
- ❖ Q: Why is our way of living important, not just within our own church family, but to the outside world as well?
 - ❖ Personal Reflection Q: What is the one big take-away that God is asking you to deal with this week?