

First Thessalonians

MARK IT UP

HomeGroup **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week 6: May 15th-21st

SELECT 2-4 QUESTIONS BELOW THAT YOU THINK WILL BE MOST HELPFUL FOR YOUR DISCUSSION...OR, USE THESE QUESTIONS AS INSPIRATION TO COME UP WITH YOUR OWN QUESTIONS.

Special note: Sermon questions will not be produced after the last week of this series on May 30th. We encourage our HomeGroups to break from meeting weekly over the summer so everyone can have a time of rest and reinvigoration before the fall. Even so, groups are encouraged to make plans to stay in touch over the summer.

Main Texts: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Connect

1. Think of a time when you were seeking God's will in some area of your life...what was the situation and what ended up happening?

This passage states one dimension of the will of God for our lives in v. 3.

2. What did you you find significant about the sermon or passage? What questions or thoughts did it raise for you?

Learn

3. Read verses 1-3 of our passage. *Sanctification* (v. 3) relates to how the Thessalonians "walk" (i.e., live their lives). Why would Paul (and God, for that matter) concern himself with their actions and not only their beliefs?

This question attempts to encourage us to think about the way our actions and our beliefs overlap. Our beliefs are invisible without actions that accompany them. Also, our visible actions help reinforce our invisible beliefs. God's desire is that our beliefs would be genuine—that they would translate into how we speak, think, and act. Speaking the gospel is essential, but so is showing the gospel by how we live.

4. In this passage, Paul hones in on one specific realm of the Thessalonians' lives: sexual immorality. Of all the areas he might address—unchecked anger, pride, selfishness, theft, lying, etc.—why do you think God would be concerned about sex?

Sexual immorality was a big part of Greco-Roman culture in the first century. For example, while wives were expected to be faithful to their husbands, (ironically) there was a level of acceptability for husbands to be unfaithful to their wives. Participation in temple

prostitution was also common for those worshipping the pantheon of gods. In other words, sexual immorality was a big part of the culture in Thessalonica.

God is the Creator of all things, including sex! His design for it is spelled out in Genesis as an act exclusive to marriage between one man and one woman (e.g., Gen 2:24). Every aspect of our lives, including our “private” relationships, are part of God’s dominion.

5. There is to be a contrast between the practices of the “Gentiles who do not know God” and the Thessalonians who do know God. Why do you think God’s desire is for His people to be distinct from others?

Throughout the Bible, God calls His people to be distinct or set apart from others. His desire is that our distinctiveness would display to a watching world what it looks like to live in a right relationship with Him. This distinctiveness is a means to tell the world about the gospel.

6. In verses 6-8, Paul mentions two different offenses when a person commits sexual immorality. It “wrong[s] his brother” and “disregards God.” How can this be true even among consenting adults?

Sexual sin is outside of God’s design for humanity, so even a consensual act is an offense against the others involved. It also disregards God’s plan, meaning that sexual immorality is destructive in both dimensions: the “horizontal” relationships between people and the “vertical” relationship with God.

Apply

7. This passage gives a lot of attention to our behavior or actions in life. How do you think our *beliefs* about God relate to *how we live* our lives? Is one more important than the other? Can one be strong and the other weak?

This is similar to question 3 above. We may give almost exclusive attention to either believing the right way or acting the right way, but both are essential.

8. Paul called the Thessalonians to a standard of sexual behavior that was radical for their day. How is God’s standard for sexuality radical for us today? Think through examples.

9. Paul seems to be encouraging the Thessalonians to not let up on putting their beliefs into action with the phrase, “more and more” in verses 1 and 10. What does it look like for us to live in such a way that we continue to grow in our faithfulness to Jesus, knowing we haven’t yet “arrived”?

What are you doing that is helping you to grow in your relationship with Jesus? What practices, habits, or commitments have you made that are causing you to live more faithfully today than you did in the past?

10. Paul's concern is that the Thessalonians live "properly before outsiders" (v. 12). What are one or two ways you are seeking to set a "proper" example for unbelievers?