



Sermon-Based Group Discussion Guide

The Simplicity of Faithfulness: What the World Needs Now 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Part 5 in a study of 1 Thessalonians by Pastor Shawn Thornton
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Fake news, moral confusion, political uncertainty, international anxiety—it's no surprise that panic and insecurity plague even the stoutest of hearts in our country. And what can we offer as Christians? Called by our Lord to provide hope and healing to those who suffer and fear, how can we be the hands and heart of Jesus to this world? Might living lives of holiness, love, and peace be enough in a world of relativism, animosity, and conflict?

Opening Question: Why is moral relativism so appealing in our culture and where are we likely to encounter it the most?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

I. Holiness to Counter Relativism

1 Thessalonians 4:7 (NIV) "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NLT) "So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you / As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend; / That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend / Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new. - John Donne, 17th century English poet

- 1. How do you think Christians today would define the word "holiness?" How is it different or similar than how nonbelievers would define the word? Explain.**
- 2. Do you think moral uprightness or perception of moral uprightness is important for the church's witness to the world? Why? How important is it today compared to other areas of the church's witness, such as showing love and acceptance, meeting physical needs, sharing the gospel, explaining biblical truth?**
- 3. Read aloud 1 Peter 1:13-16 above in the NIV, NLT, and Message paraphrase. Take note of the action verbs. What are some actions that move us toward holiness?**
- 4. Can you recall a time you saw real growth in an area of holiness in your life? What spiritual activities or disciplines helped you grow in that area?**
- 5. Is there an area of your life you are seeking God's help to make more pleasing to Him? Share with one another and pray about it together at the end of the discussion time.**

II. Love to Counter Animosity

1 Thessalonians 4:9 (NIV) “Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.”

1 John 2:9-10a (NIV) “Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light...”

*Oh! That thy Love might overflow my Heart / To fire the same with Love: for Love I would.
But oh! My straighten'd Breast! my Lifeless Spark! / My Fireless Flame! What Chilly Love and Cold?
In measure small! In Manner Chilly! See. / Lord, blow the Coal: Thy Love Enflame in me.
-Edward Taylor, 17th century American poet*

1. **Have you personally experienced animosity from someone recently? What feelings were stirred in you through that encounter? And what helped to calm you down and move your words, attitudes, or actions toward love?**
2. **Jesus experienced great animosity while on earth. From your understanding of scripture, what strikes you about how he dealt with those who came against him?**

III. Peace to Counter Conflict

1 Thessalonians 11b-12 (NIV) “You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”

Romans 12:18 (NIV) “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone.”

“Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; And where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved, as to love. -St. Francis of Assisi

1. **What are the characteristics of a peacemaker - someone who helps resolve conflict?**
2. **Old Testament heroine Abigail was married to an obnoxious man who insulted the future king David as he fled with his men from the murderous King Saul. Because of the insult, David vowed to kill Abigail’s husband and her whole household, but Abigail met David on his way to her home, assuaged his anger, and makes peace. Read 1 Samuel 25:23-33.**
 - a. **What impresses you about how Abigail handled the situation with David? What character traits did Abigail evidence in her act of making peace?**
 - b. **Is there a tense or conflict prone situation in your life? Share and ask God to help you take steps to move toward peace.**