



How To Please Your Heavenly Father

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12



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The Christian life can be compared to a walk. In fact, this is one of Paul's favorite pictures: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (*Eph. 4:1*); "walk not as other Gentiles walk" (*Eph. 4:17*); "walk in love" (*Eph. 5:2*); "walk as children of light" (*Eph. 5:8*).

Taking A Walk With God

The Christian life begins with a step of faith. But that step leads to a walk of faith, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (*2 Cor. 5:7*). Walking suggests progress, and we must make progress in the Christian life (*Phil. 3:13–16; Heb. 6:1*). Walking also demands strength, and God has promised, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be” (*Deut. 33:25*).

Taking A Walk With God

But we must be sure to “*walk in the light*” for the enemy has put traps and detours to catch us (*1 John 1:5–7*). Of course, at the end of life’s walk, we will step into the very presence of the Lord.

Taking A Walk With God

Paul described a threefold walk for the Christian to follow.

Walk In Holiness

1 Thes. 4:1-8

The moral climate in the Roman Empire was not healthy. Immorality was a way of life; and, thanks to slavery, people had the leisure time to indulge in the latest pleasures. The Christian message of holy living was new to that culture, and it was not easy for these young believers to fight the temptations around them. Paul gave four reasons why they should live a holy life and abstain from sensual lusts.

To Please God

(v. 1)

Everybody lives to please somebody. Many people live to please themselves. They have no sensitivity to the needs of others.

“The soul of a journey,” wrote William Hazlitt, *“is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases.”* That advice may work for a vacation but it could never work in the everyday affairs of life. Christians cannot go through life pleasing only themselves

To Please God

We must also be careful when it comes to pleasing others. It is possible to both please others and honor God, but it is also possible to dishonor God. *“For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ”* (Gal. 1:10). This had been Paul’s attitude when he ministered in Thessalonica. *“Even so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who trieth our hearts”* (1 Thes. 2:4).

To Please God

Pleasing God ought to be the major motive of the Christian life. Children should live to please their father. The Holy Spirit works in our lives *“both to will and to do of His good pleasure”* (Phil. 2:13).

Jesus said, *“I do always those things that please Him”* (John 8:29).

To Please God

Pleasing God means much more than simply doing God's will. It is possible to obey God and yet not please Him. Jonah is a case in point. He obeyed God and did what he was commanded, but his heart was not in it. God blessed His Word but He could not bless His servant. So Jonah sat outside the city of Nineveh angry with everybody, including the Lord!

To Please God

How do we know what pleases God? How do we know what pleases an earthly father? By listening to him and living with him. As we read the Word, and as we fellowship in worship and service, we get to know the heart of God; and this opens us up to the will of God.

To Obey God

(vv. 2–3)

When he ministered in Thessalonica, Paul gave the believers the commandments of God regarding personal purity. The word commandments is a military term. It refers to orders handed down from superior officers. We are soldiers in God's army, and we must obey orders. *“No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer”*.

To Obey God

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Paul reminded these new believers that sexual immorality did not please God. God created sex, and He has the authority to govern its use. From the beginning, He established marriage as a sacred union between one man and one woman. God created sex both for the continuance of the race and for the pleasure of the marriage partners.

To Obey God

God's commandments concerning sex are not for the purpose of robbing people of joy, but rather of protecting them that they might not lose their joy. "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*" builds a wall around marriage that makes the relationship not a prison, but a safe and beautiful garden.

To Glorify God

(vv. 4–5)

Christians are supposed to be different from the unsaved. The Gentiles (*unsaved*) do not know God; therefore, they live ungodly lives. But we know God, and we are obligated to glorify Him in this world. *“God’s plan is to make you holy, and that entails first of all a clean break with sexual immorality”* (1 Thes. 4:3).

To Glorify God

“Possess his vessel” in 1 Thessalonians 4:4 probably means *“control his body,”* for our bodies are the vessels of God. Paul wrote to all Christians, not just the married ones. The Christian who commits sexual sin is sinning against his own body (*1 Cor. 6:19–20*), and he is robbing God of the glory He should receive through a believer’s way of life.

To Glorify God

This explains why God gives such demanding requirements for spiritual leadership in the church (*1 Tim. 3*). If spiritual leaders cannot rule in their own homes, how can they lead the church? If we glorify God in our bodies, then we can glorify Him in the body which is the church.

To Escape The Judgment Of God

(vs 6-8)

God is no respecter of persons; He must deal with His children when they sin. While it is true that the Christian is not under condemnation (*John 5:24; Rom. 8:1*), it is also true that he is not free from the harvest of sorrow that comes when we sow to the flesh (*Gal. 6:7-8*).

To Escape The Judgment Of God

(vs 6-8)

When King David committed adultery, he tried to cover his sin, but God chastened him severely. When David confessed his sins, God forgave him; but God could not change the consequences. David reaped what he sowed, and it was a painful experience for him.

Walk In Harmony

1 Thes. 4:9-10

Just as God's love is a holy love, so our love for God and for one another ought to motivate us to holy living. The more we live like God, the more we will love one another. If a Christian really loves his brother, he will not sin against him (1 Thes. 4:6). taught us to love one another when He said, "*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another*" (John 13:34). The Holy Spirit taught us to love one another when He poured out the love of God in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).

Walk in Honesty

(vs 11-12)

Christians not only have the obligation to love one another but also to be good testimonies to the people of the world. Paul's great concern was that the Thessalonian believers earn their own wages and not become freeloaders depending on the support of unbelievers.

How To Please Your Heavenly Father

We see how practical the Christian walk really is. The obedient Christian will have a holy life by abstaining from sexual sin; a harmonious life by loving the brethren; and an honest life by working with his hands and not meddling in the affairs of others. When unsaved people see Christ magnified in this kind of a life, they will either oppose it with envy or desire to have it for themselves. Either way, God is glorified.