

Subject: Called to Righteousness - Sermon Recap from 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Dear Church Family,

God is not shy about calling us out of sin and up into righteousness and this is one of those passages that can be hard to hear and even harder to apply. We have some great discipleship resources on this passage [[HERE](#)].

Summary: The sermon explored God's call for us to live lives that please Him through sanctification and holiness, specifically addressing the area of sexual purity. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians reminds us that authentic Christianity is not about bare-bones obedience or performance-based religion, but about abounding more and more in Biblical love that transforms how we live.

We examined how God desires our hearts first, knowing that our obedience will follow as an expression of that love. The passage confronts the cultural acceptance of sexual immorality and calls us to possess our own vessels in honor, living distinctly as God's holy people. This has profound implications for our spiritual life—God is more concerned about our holiness than our temporary happiness, and He calls us to replace what wars against our victory in Christ with the things of Christ.

Takeaways:

Our goal and motivation must be pleasing God through Biblical love. In God's kingdom, our performance does not equal relationship with God. He wants our hearts knit to His, and when we love Him, we naturally sacrifice, surrender, and submit to His plan. This abounding life means continuing to grow "more and more" in pursuing God's will, regardless of our circumstances.

God calls us to sanctification—the process of being purified and made holy. This doesn't mean the battles are done, but the war is won. Whether we've never walked in sexual immorality, have left it behind, or are currently struggling, God's word lovingly confronts us not to judge but to call us into His will. The solution is profound yet difficult: stop the sin, possess your own vessel through self-control, and replace temptation with the Word and things of Christ.

Holiness brings honor to God and to ourselves as His servants. We must avoid the honey-traps we lay for ourselves and flee from situations that invite us to forget God rather than honor Him. While the world says "indulge yourself," God's plan is that we deny ourselves. Remember: God will not be mocked, and He will avenge unfaithfulness, but He also provides the Holy Spirit's wisdom and power to enable us to walk in victory.

Closing Remarks:

I recognize this teaching touches sacred ground and may reopen wounds or create discomfort. Please know that our leadership team is here not to judge but to walk alongside you in your journey toward holiness. If you need support, prayer, or someone to talk with confidentially, please reach out. God's grace is sufficient, and His calling to holiness is an invitation to the abundant life He intends for each of us.

Let us continue to abound more and more in love, living lives that are pleasing to our Lord.

In Christ,

Pastor Jim

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Called to Righteousness

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

I. Introduction:

1. The thread running through chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians is that of Christian living, including vision, mission, purpose, and application. *We will cover the first two of these movements in our passage today.*
2. A few considerations for us include:
 - A. Let's make sure we are considering chapter 4 in the light cast by Paul in chapter 3. *Specifically that Jesus is coming back and of the nature, purposes, and effects of abounding in Godly love;*
 - B. Authentic Christians are a distinct group of people, for holiness (found only in those in Christ Jesus) is both precious and rare; and
 - C. This is one of the teachings you won't hear at many churches as there are not many teachers who would think this is a message that attracts newcomers and encourages the body. *In fact, it is a teaching that is loaded with cultural controversy and speaks of the brokenness in many of our lives so it can reopen wounds, challenge our sense of right-and-wrong, and create division.*

So, you might ask, why teach it? *Because that's God's charge...we are to teach the entire counsel of His word.* We don't pick and choose what is comfortable, non-controversial, convenient, or some "hobby-horse" priority keeping us from the blessings of knowing God and His will ever-more fully.

With that, lets dig into this passage.

II. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2: Victory in Christ

1. While many translations, including the NKJV, use the word “Finally” in opening v1, it’s within the semantic range of the Greek word represented here **AND more consistent with the furthering of chapter 3 along with more effectively pointing to the important matters that follow to use the KJV interpretation of “Furthermore”.**
2. We also note a certain urgency both in the choice of his words, but also that he is exhorting in the Lord. **What’s more, Paul is restating that they should abound more and more in Biblical love as they live out God’s word in pleasing Him.**
3. There is a lot wrapped up in these two verses that is important for us to grasp.
 - A. First up, lets diagram these two sentences describing VICTORY – one of my favorite Biblical rewards:
 - (1) Goal & Motivation is pleasing God;
 - (2) **Blessing is the abounding life - with Biblical love as its source AND itself another blessing;**
 - (3) The “how” is found at the end of v1 in lovingly walking in the word. **Importantly, this is not a suggestion or optional, but divine direction; and finally**
 - (4) Accountability to Jesus’ authority is seen in both verses;
 - B. Next, lets dig a little deeper into a couple of Paul’s points:
 - i. Because pleasing God happens only through the agency of love, Paul is exhorting them to NOT keep the law thinking that performance equals relationship with God. **Scripture repeatedly testifies that He wants our hearts knit to His...that is, we do His will because we love Him AND because we love Him we sacrifice, surrender, and submit to Him. A small sampling of the many powerful verses about pleasing God includes:**

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1 John 3:22: And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

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Colossians 1:10: that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

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Hebrews 11:6: But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- ii. The word 'abound' in v1 indicates living an outstanding life OR a life in the excess of quality and quantity in Biblical love and in who God has made us to be in character, gifts, and talents. [Along with this passage, this is the abundant life spoken of directly or indirectly in a good number of verses such as \(for notetakers\) Psalm 16:11 and Romans 15:13:](#)

This abounding offers the idea of continuing with “more and more”, meaning growing and pressing forward in pursuing God’s will and plan...no matter our circumstances.

C. Let’s close out this section with two overarching truths:

- i. First, Biblical love is source, cause, and blessing. [The Lord neither judges us nor determines His relationship with us based on our performance.](#) Instead, He wants our hearts, knowing that our obedience will follow as an expression of our love.
- ii. Second, there is a clear sense that Paul does NOT want them to settle for the bare bones of Christianity, but to live in the fulness that God intends for them.

Our next verses are the ones that can be uncomfortable for you and certainly for me...

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III. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8: **God's People Living for God's Will in God's Way**

1. Now Paul takes the broader lessons of verses 1-2 and drills down to a primary challenge in the Thessalonian church – sexual immorality. *In the Greek, this immorality includes idolatry, promiscuity, fornication, harlotry, adultery, incest, and any other sexual act outside of what God says is reserved for the marriage bed.*

In the Greek world back in the day, culture and common polytheistic religious practices embraced and promoted sexual immorality. *And, from Paul's letter, it's clear this perversion of God's gift of marital intimacy had been corrupted from God's intent.*

One or more of these sexual sins has touched most every one of us directly, through our families, or close friends and this is why it is considered 'sacred' ground to not tread on within much of the church.

2. Yet, here we are with God's word lovingly confronting us. *As v4 notes, not for the purpose of judging us, but for the purpose of calling us into His will of sanctifying us toward pursuing holiness.* The Greek word for sanctification here is "hagiasmos" and it means the process of being purified, made holy, and being consecrated unto the Lord.
 - A. This does NOT imply the battles are done, but it indicates the war is won!
 - B. As many of you can testify, this does not indicate the temptations of our hearts are in the rearview mirror and that the pressure of the world and Satan are inconsequential, but that

the child of God has purposed in their heart to walk in God's victory for him or her.

3. Those hearing my voice right now make up three groups:
- A. Group 1 are those that have never walked in sexual immorality. Group 2 are those that have walked in this sin, but are no longer doing so.

For both of these groups, we can say well done. You are in and will remain in this group by God's grace and love. As part of abounding more and more, you will find your life more aligned with God's will...a wonderful and fulfilling place to be.

For those having this sin in your backstory, you may have ongoing challenges with relationships, temptations, and other consequences. Know your victory is found only in the Lord.

- B. Group 3 are those still in the midst of living your life, no matter that it may seem different in the moment, in bondage to this sin according to God's word. The simple solution is often the most profound AND most difficult for us to apply – **“STOP IT”**.
- i. Walking in sexual immorality is sin against God AND, as our passage says, against those we defraud through our unrighteousness. Don't accept the deception of your own heart, the culture around you, or the lies of the evil one wanting to kill, steal, and destroy you from Jesus. Yes, we are prone to fall prey to these self-destructive, heart-corrupting behaviors. This is one of the blessings of God setting us apart for His purposes; specifically, that in being in His will, we are far less susceptible to falling away.

But still, stopping sexual immorality in its various forms is a monumental challenge – one that is really hard, but not very complicated. Which is why it remains high up in Satan's playbook. Ignoring or diminishing God's word

does not change Him or His judgment and willful ignorance regarding sexual immorality condemns many.

If you need help in this area, the Spirit of God is available ALONG with His army, the church. None are here to judge you, but to walk and rejoice with you as you respond to God's call to holiness.

- ii. In this and other bible passages, we are shown the path and power of the Holy Spirit enabling you to abstain from sins grip. Paul never says the desires and temptations will pass (although God can do that), but reminds them and us to “possess your own vessel”; another words, walk in self-control.

Doing so will bring honor to the God you serve and to yourself as a servant of the living God. Doing so will be a clear break from the old-not-in-Christ-you to the new-in-Christ-you.

- Boyfriend/Girlfriend, this is saying if you are having a sexual relationship, stop. Same sex couples – stop! Promiscuous – stop! Adultery – stop! Masturbation – stop! Other forms of sexual immorality – stop! You are not possessing your own vessel. You are not to give into your desires, including sexual desires, but to live as God says is right. The implication here is that as you stop, you are to replace that which wars against your victory in Christ with the word and things of Christ – this is the “how” of self-control.

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But Pastor, what do you mean regarding “that which wars against my victory”. There are many honey-traps and other temptations we often lay for ourselves AND when we are not busy doing that, Satan is laying them out for us. Some examples include:

God made me this way, so it must be right...you don't know all I have been through...I thought he/she loved me...it's not so bad, God has forgiven me...how about the movies or social media content feeding the fantasies of my pride or the fears of not being in control or measuring up.

Candlelight dinner alone at your or your girlfriends house with no one else home. Sweet, intimate, and if we are honest, nearly impossible to control the lusts of our flesh. So, as Paul says in **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**, run away! Don't put yourself in this position; for, Christian, you are God's now.

Living on the edge with suggestive words, inappropriate touching, or taking a swim in the pool on a moonlit night is an open invitation to forget about God rather than to honor and please Him as you are called to do.

All this to say:

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(1) While the world is saying "indulge" yourself...God's plan is that you deny yourself.

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(2) God is more concerned about your holiness than your happiness!

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IV. Closing: Four Additional Powerful Takeaways

1. God will not be mocked; as our passage says, He will avenge;
2. Godly Honor is Found in Holiness;
3. We are to function for the purposes and glory of God WITH the character of God; and
4. Jesus has made the way, victory is for any that will choose Him over the lusts of our flesh and the tempting's of Satan's world system.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 Called to Righteousness

I. Introduction: Being Authentic Christians

- Hard teaching to share and, for some, to hear.
- Authentic Christians are a distinct group of people.

II. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2: Victory in Christ

- Diagram these verses reveals (1) a Christian's Goal and motivation is pleasing God, (2) the abounding life is a wonderful blessing as its source, biblical love, (3) "how" we please God is through walking in His word, and (4) we are accountable to Jesus.

Additional Scripture References: 1 Jn 3:22; Col 1:10; He 11:6; Ps 16:11; Ro 15:13

III. 1 Thessalonians 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8: God's People Living for God's Will in God's Way

- The lessons learned here target sexual idolatry of all types with central principles also in view in all areas of sin.
- "Stop it"; stop sexual idolatry for it is sin against God and your brethren. Learn to walk in self-control.

Additional Scripture References: 1 Cor 6:12-20

IV. Closing: Four Additional Powerful Takeaways

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5-Day Devotional

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Called to Righteousness

Day 1: The Abundant Life in Christ

Reading: 1 Thes 4:1-2; Jn 10:10

Devotional: Paul urges believers to "abound more and more" in pleasing God. This isn't about mere survival Christianity or checking religious boxes. God desires that we experience life in its fullness—overflowing with His love, purpose, and joy. The abundant life Jesus promises isn't found in worldly pleasures or minimal obedience, but in wholehearted devotion to Him. Consider today: Are you settling for bare-bones faith, or are you pressing forward into the richness God offers?

Your relationship with Him isn't measured by performance but by love. When love drives your obedience, you discover the path to true abundance. Ask God to reveal areas where you've settled for less than His best. What does "abounding more and more" look like in your daily walk with Christ?

Day 2: Sanctification—The Process of Being Made Holy

Reading: 1 Thes 4:3-4; Hebrews 12:14

Devotional: God's will for you is sanctification—being set apart, purified, and consecrated for His purposes. This isn't instantaneous perfection but a lifelong journey of transformation. The war is won through Christ, but battles remain. Sanctification means purposing in your heart to walk in God's victory daily, even when temptations arise. You are no longer defined by your past but by whose you are. The Holy Spirit empowers you to "possess your own vessel"—to exercise self-control over desires that war against your soul.

Holiness isn't about your happiness in the moment; it's about your eternal joy in God's presence. Embrace the process, knowing God is faithful to complete the work He began in you. What areas of your life need surrendering to God's sanctifying work today?

Day 3: Victory Through Self-Control **Reading: 1 Thes 4:4-5; Galatians 5:22-25**

Devotional: Self-control is not self-generated willpower but a fruit of the Spirit. Paul instructs believers to possess their own vessels in honor, not in passionate lust like those who don't know God. This requires replacing what wars against your victory with the things of Christ. Temptation loses power when we fill our lives with Scripture, prayer, worship, and godly community. The "how" of self-control is intentional displacement—running from compromise and running toward Christ.

Consider the honey-traps you set for yourself: situations, relationships, or entertainment that make holiness nearly impossible. God calls you to flee, not flirt with, temptation. His grace empowers you to honor Him with your body, which belongs to Him. What practical steps can you take to avoid situations that compromise your holiness?

Day 4: Pleasing God Through Love Reading: 1 Thes 4:1; 1 John 3:22; Col 1:10

Devotional: God desires your heart, not merely your compliance. Pleasing Him flows from love, not legalistic performance. When you grasp how deeply God loves you, obedience becomes a joyful response rather than burdensome duty. Biblical love is both the source and blessing of the Christian life. It motivates us to walk worthy of our calling, bearing fruit in every good work while growing in knowledge of God. Without faith and love, pleasing God is impossible. He rewards those who diligently seek Him—not with salvation earned, but with intimacy experienced.

Today, examine your motivations. Do you obey out of duty or devotion? Let love for Christ compel you toward holiness, knowing this pleases the Father's heart. How does understanding God's love for you transform your desire to obey Him?

Day 5: Accountability and the Fear of the Lord

Reading: 1 Thes 4:6-8; Heb 10:26-31

Devotional: God will not be mocked. While His love is unfailing, His holiness demands accountability. Paul warns that the Lord will avenge those who defraud others through unrighteousness and reject His call to holiness. This isn't meant to terrify but to awaken us to reality: we serve a living God who sees all and judges justly. Ignoring His Word doesn't change His character or diminish His standards. Yet embedded in this warning is profound hope—God has called us through the Holy Spirit, making holiness possible. Despising this calling means despising God Himself.

Today, let healthy fear of the Lord drive you toward repentance and renewed commitment. His discipline flows from love, desiring your freedom and flourishing, not your destruction. Are there areas where you've been ignoring God's conviction? Bring them before Him in honest confession today.

Small Group Study Guide

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Called to Righteousness

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to see and understand His word as you discuss the sermon.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. Our goal is pleasing God through love, not performance-based religion
2. God calls us to an abundant, overflowing life in Christ
3. Sexual purity is non-negotiable for followers of Christ
4. Sanctification is a process—the war is won, but battles remain
5. God will not be mocked; He calls us to holiness, not uncleanness

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. What does it mean to "please God" versus simply keeping rules? How have you experienced the difference between relationship-driven obedience and performance-driven religion?
2. Paul urges believers to "abound more and more." In what specific areas of your spiritual life do you sense God calling you to grow and excel right now?
3. Read Hebrews 11:6 together. How does faith connect to pleasing God? What does it look like practically to "diligently seek Him"?
4. The sermon mentioned that God wants our hearts, knowing obedience will follow. Why is the order important (heart first, then obedience)? What happens when we reverse it?
5. Why do you think Paul addresses sexual immorality so directly in this letter? What made it particularly challenging for the Thessalonian church, and how is our culture similar or different?
6. The sermon divided listeners into three groups regarding sexual purity. Without sharing inappropriately, which group do you identify with? What encouragement or challenge do you need most?
7. Verse 4 talks about possessing "your own vessel" with honor. What does self-control look like in practical terms when it comes to sexual temptation?

8. The sermon mentioned "honey-traps" we set for ourselves. What are common situations or circumstances that make sexual purity more difficult? How can we practice wisdom in avoiding these?
9. Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 together. Why does Paul tell us to "flee" sexual immorality rather than simply resist it? What's the difference?
10. Verse 6 warns that "the Lord is the avenger" of sexual sin. How should this truth impact our choices? How do we balance God's love with His justice?
11. The sermon states: "God is more concerned about your holiness than your happiness." How does this statement challenge modern Christian thinking? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
12. Paul writes that rejecting this teaching means rejecting God (v. 8). Why is sexual purity such a serious issue to God? What does our sexuality reveal about our understanding of being made in God's image?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. Eliminate a Honey-Trap: Identify one situation, habit, or relationship pattern that makes sexual purity difficult and take concrete steps to remove it (cancel subscription, set phone boundaries, change routines, etc.).
2. Accountability Partnership: Ask someone of the same gender to be an accountability partner specifically around sexual purity. Schedule a weekly check-in.
3. Replace, Don't Just Remove: If you're struggling with sexual sin, identify what you'll replace that time/energy with. Start a new spiritual discipline (Scripture memory, worship, service, etc.).
4. Heart Check: Spend 30 minutes in prayer this week asking God to reveal any area where you're serving Him from duty rather than love. Journal what He shows you.
5. Study Holiness: Read through one of these passages each day this week, asking God to deepen your understanding of His call to holiness:
 - a. Day 1: Leviticus 19:1-2
 - b. Day 2: 1 Peter 1:13-16
 - c. Day 3: Romans 12:1-2
 - d. Day 4: Ephesians 5:1-7
 - e. Day 5: Colossians 3:1-10

- f. Day 6: 1 John 3:1-10
- g. Day 7: Review 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Closing Prayer Points:

- Thank God for His grace and the victory already won in Christ
- Ask for Holy Spirit power to walk in sexual purity
- Pray for those struggling with sexual sin to find freedom
- Request grace to love God more deeply, leading to joyful obedience
- Commit to supporting one another in accountability and encouragement

Discussion Questions

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Called to Righteousness

1. Paul emphasizes pleasing God through love rather than mere law-keeping. How does this distinction change the way you approach obedience in your daily walk with Christ?
2. The sermon states that God is more concerned about your holiness than your happiness. How does this truth challenge contemporary Christian culture and your personal expectations of the Christian life?
3. What does it mean practically to 'possess your own vessel' and exercise self-control in areas where you face the strongest temptations?
4. Paul calls believers to 'abound more and more' rather than settle for bare-bones Christianity. In what specific areas of your spiritual life have you been settling instead of pursuing the abundant life God offers?
5. The sermon mentions that many churches avoid teaching on sexual immorality because it is controversial and potentially divisive. Why is it essential to teach the entire counsel of God's word even when it makes us uncomfortable?
6. How does understanding sanctification as a process rather than a one-time event change your perspective on ongoing struggles with sin and temptation?
7. The passage warns that sexual immorality is not only sin against God but also defrauds others. How does recognizing the relational impact of sexual sin deepen your understanding of its seriousness?
8. Which of the three groups described in the sermon do you identify with regarding sexual purity, and what specific steps can you take this week to honor God in this area?
9. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that God has called them through the Holy Spirit and will avenge unfaithfulness. How should the reality of God's judgment shape the choices you make when you think no one is watching?
10. The sermon emphasizes replacing sinful patterns with the word and things of Christ. What practical rhythms or disciplines can you establish to fill your life with godliness rather than leaving space for temptation?

Dinner Conversation Starters

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Called to Righteousness

1. God's Pleasure vs. People's Approval

How would our daily choices (school, work, friendships, entertainment) look different if our main goal was to “please God” instead of trying to impress people or fit in?

2. Abounding “More and More”

Paul talks about abounding “more and more” in love and godly living. What is one practical way our family could “abound more and more” this week—something small but real that would help us grow closer to God and to each other?

3. God's Design for Our Bodies

The sermon talked about “possessing your own vessel” (having self-control with our bodies). In an age where the culture says, “Do whatever feels good,” what do you think it looks like to honor God with our bodies, hearts, and minds?

4. Holiness vs. Happiness

We heard the line, “God is more concerned about your holiness than your happiness.” Do you agree or disagree, and why? Can you think of a time when saying “no” to something that felt good in the moment actually protected you or led to something better later?

5. Walking With the Wounded

Sexual sin and brokenness touch almost every family in some way. How can we, as a family, be honest about our own struggles, show grace to others who are hurting or trapped in sin, and still hold firmly to what God says is right and holy?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Called to Righteousness

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **God Made My Body Special**: Teach that their body is a gift from God, and they should treat it and others' bodies with respect.

Discussion Questions:

- Who made your body? (God.)
 - What can you say or do if someone wants to touch you in a way that feels wrong or strange?
 - Who are safe grown-ups you can tell if something like that happens?
2. **Saying "No" Can Please God**: Help them see that saying "no" to wrong things is a way of loving and pleasing God.

Discussion Questions:

- What could you do if you see a show or video that makes you feel uncomfortable?
 - How do you think God feels when you turn something off because it's not good?
 - How can Mommy/Daddy help you when that happens?
3. **Loving Others with Kind Words and Safe Touch**: Connect love and holiness to kindness, safe touch, and gentle behavior.

Discussion Questions:

- Is it okay to say "no, thank you" to a hug if you don't want one?
- How can you show kindness without having to hug or touch?
- How can we respect other people's bodies and space?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Guarding What We See and Click**: Help them understand that honoring God includes what they watch and do online (games, YouTube, TikTok-style shorts, chats).

Discussion Questions:

- How can you tell if a video or image is not pleasing to God?
 - What are some "stop signs" that mean you should click away or close the app?
 - What could you say if a friend wants to watch something you know isn't right?
2. **Friends, Jokes, and Peer Pressure**: Apply "abounding more and more" and self-control to locker-room talk, group chats, and school jokes.

Discussion Questions:

- How do those jokes make you feel inside? Do they draw you closer to God or pull you away?

- What are some things you could say or do if friends are telling inappropriate jokes?
 - When is it wise to leave a group chat or ask an adult for help?
3. **Early Crushes and Honoring Others**: Teach that crushes and liking someone are normal feelings, but God calls us to treat others with purity and respect.

Discussion Questions:

- What's the difference between liking someone and acting in ways that don't honor God?
- How can you treat someone you like with respect instead of joining in teasing or gossip?
- How do you think God wants you to think about "boyfriend/girlfriend" at your age?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Self-Control in Digital Spaces**: Apply "possess your own vessel" to phones, social media, and private browsing.

Discussion Questions:

- What usually happens inside you (thoughts, feelings) when something sexual pops up on your screen?
- What are some practical steps you can take in the moment (exit, block, tell someone, use filters)?
- How can we, as a family, set up boundaries (apps, time limits, no phones in bedroom at night, etc.) that actually help you, not just control you?

2. **Dating, Boundaries, and "Stop It"**: Connect the sermon's call—"Stop it"—with concrete dating boundaries and physical limits.

Discussion Questions:

- What boundaries do you think are wise before you're actually married?
- What situations (being alone, certain times of night, certain locations) make it much harder to say "no"?
- How can you and a boyfriend/girlfriend plan ahead to avoid those situations rather than trusting "we'll be strong enough in the moment"?

3. **Group Culture: Chats, Sexting, and Pressure**: Apply holiness and not "defrauding" others to group chats, DMs, and picture sharing.

Discussion Questions:

- How is sharing or asking for sexual pictures a way of "defrauding" or using someone instead of honoring them?
- What are the long-term risks—spiritual, emotional, and practical—of sending or saving those images?
- How do you think God wants you to respond if someone sends you or asks you for that kind of content?

4. Standing Out VS. Fitting In: Tie in “God is more concerned about your holiness than your happiness” with real peer pressure.

Discussion Questions:

- Where do you feel the strongest pressure to go along with what everyone else is doing?
- What might it cost you socially to live differently—and what might you gain with God and in your own heart?
- How can our family support you when you choose holiness over popularity?

Tips for Parents:

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it’s okay to ask questions, even if things don’t make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Called to Righteousness

1. Pleasing God in Group Culture

Bible Reference: Colossians 1:10 – “...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

Application: Your worth and direction come from pleasing God, not from being accepted by the group. Group norms (jokes, parties, “what everyone does”) don’t get to define right and wrong—God does.

Scenario: You’re at a hangout and everyone starts joking sexually about classmates, rating people’s bodies, or sharing explicit memes. You feel pressure to laugh, join in, or at least stay quiet so you’re not “that person.”

Discussion: When your friend group normalizes sexual humor or disrespect, what does “walking worthy of the Lord” look like in that moment—what could you say, do, or refuse to participate in?

2. Sexual Purity and Self-Control Online

Bible Reference: 1 Thessalonians 4:3–4 – “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.”

Application: “Possessing your vessel” today includes your phone, your eyes, your clicks, and what you search for. Honoring God means you don’t use digital spaces to secretly feed lust or curiosity that leads you away from Him.

Scenario: You’re scrolling late at night and stumble onto an account with sexual content. Part of you wants to click away, but part of you wants to explore, follow, or search for more.

Discussion: In that exact moment of temptation, what are 2–3 concrete actions you can take to “possess your vessel” (for example: unfollow, block, get up, text a trusted friend/mentor, move your device out of your room)?

3. Sexting, Nudes, and Not Defrauding Others

Bible Reference: 1 Thessalonians 4:6 – “...that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such...”

Application: Using someone’s body for excitement, images, or attention—online or offline—is a form of defrauding them. Even if they “consent,” God still calls it sin and promises to avenge exploitation.

Scenario: Someone you like asks you for a nude or a sexual picture, promising it’s “just between us.” Or a group chat shares someone else’s private photos as a joke.

Discussion: How does asking for, sending, or saving sexual images “take advantage of and defraud” someone, and what is a God-honoring response when you’re asked to participate?

4. Dating Boundaries and Real Love vs. Lust

Bible Reference: 1 Thessalonians 4:7 – “For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.”

Application: Holiness in dating means you don’t treat each other like test-drives for marriage or outlets for sexual experimentation. Real love moves toward holiness, not just physical chemistry.

Scenario: You and your boyfriend/girlfriend are alone (house, car, bedroom) and start pushing physical boundaries. You both say you love each other, and it feels like the “next step.”

Discussion: If God has called you to holiness, not uncleanness, what specific boundaries (places, times, physical lines) need to change in your relationship—and how can you communicate that clearly and kindly?

These points aim to empower Gen Z to live out their faith genuinely and courageously in various aspects of their daily lives, reflecting Biblical integrity, compassion, and steadfastness.