

Subject: Christian Conduct, Commitment, and Character: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Check out the many discipleship resources for this teaching at [RESOURCES LINK]. For those wanting to view the teaching, us this [[TEACHING LINK](#)].

Dear Church Family,

I just love God's word and I hope you do as well. May this summary spur you to use our discipleship resources in helping you grow in experientially knowing and following Christ.

Summary: This week's sermon explored Paul's powerful teaching on Christian conduct, commitment, and character from 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12. We examined how Paul and the Thessalonian church modeled gospel-centered living despite persecution and hardship, reminding us that every believer is called into ministry—not just to "do" church, but to "be" the church. The passage challenged us to examine our motivations: Are we seeking to please God or man? Paul's example shows us that God has approved and trusted us with the gospel, calling us to live lives worthy of this high calling. The implications for our spiritual life are profound—we are invited to embrace the cost of discipleship, to pour ourselves out for others as Paul did, and to walk in a manner that reflects the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Takeaways:

You are approved by God to share the gospel. This approval and trust are gifts from God, not something we earned. The question is: What are we doing with this precious gift? Are we living it out or squandering it?

1. Our motivation matters more than our methods. Paul warned against flattering words, pretense, and seeking glory from people. Instead, we are called to please God who tests our hearts, knowing that we are accountable to Him alone.
2. Walking worthy of God means imitating Christ in daily life. This includes doing justly, loving mercy, walking humbly, being holy in conduct, walking in love and wisdom, and presenting ourselves as living sacrifices. It's not complicated, but it is hard—requiring us to die to ourselves and value God above our wants and the world's lies.

As we move forward this week, let's ask ourselves: Are we following Paul's example as he followed Christ? Are we pouring ourselves out for others? Are we choosing to faithfully, lovingly, joyfully, and obediently follow Him? The choice remains ours.

May you be strengthened to walk worthy of the God who calls you into His kingdom and glory.

In Christ, Pastor Jim

Christian Conduct, Commitment, & Character

Slide 2

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

I. Introduction: Fit for the Masters Use

1. Prison in Philippi, persecution in Jerusalem and Ephesus, stoned and left for dead in Lystra...Paul suffered many things as he preached the Good News. As we read in **1 Corinthians 2:3**, he was no stranger to persecution, weakness, and fear. Yet, God had used Paul's difficulties to reveal Himself, build Paul's faith, and to make Paul more Christlike.
2. As we study Paul's words, note that his care, concern, and love colored his words and efforts. He did NOT diminish that which God had made, given new life, value, meaning, and purpose, but sought to encourage and otherwise emphasize the preeminence of the Gospel of Christ...as motivation, conduct, and destination. Through his words and the testimony of his life, Paul sought for them to "own" that Jesus uses all things, including the hardest of things, to bring them into victory as children of the living God.
3. One final point in our opening today. Over the years, Bible teachers and students have often thought to focus on Paul in this passage. Whenever this emphasis is made, we tend to consider this passage as being for pastor, elder, or leader. Yet, we all have a duty and responsibility to be a vibrant part of the body of Christ for every believer is called into ministry. The reality is this passage is about Christ inviting you into OR deeper into an eternal relationship with Him.

Slide 4

II. 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6: Approved and Trusted by God

1. Our opening three verses point to the Christians motivation being found in the person of Jesus Christ. For the gospel is the source of life. The gospel speaks of God's plan, will, attributes, and

character. Yes, the Thessalonians persecution was all too real and all too relentless.

Yet, the gospel speaks of who the child of God is regardless of our circumstances. One must not stand on the emotions, attitudes, or lies of the world, including the false teaching Paul is addressing in this letter – no matter how attractive they may seem.

A. Indeed, our suffering is central to God's plan. Paul genuinely loves them and is burdened for them to experientially know and live life with Jesus at the center. Paul was encouraging AND even exhorting them to not simply "do" church, but to "be" the church. A get up and get going moment! Don't let the enemy sideline you! Instead, see how Jesus has woven us together that we may testify of His goodness, holiness, righteousness, and healing.

B. Further, Paul was noting that the gospel costs each of us something. It costs the child of God his or her very life. The gospel costs us relationships, man-favor, and many times, the comforts our old sin-stained hearts long for.

C. In using a negative "framing" to present what the Gospel is not in v3, Paul is telling them they have found victory in the gospel...they are to live out what they have received...a new heart and transforming mind...the gospel is divine truth and NOT the deceit of human motivations, intellect, or power.

Slide 6

2. In v4-6, Paul continues his run of negatives in further amplifying a child of God's rightful motivations, conduct, and commitment to Christ. In this, the church is given great warnings and an almost impossible to believe, shocking truth!

A. First up we will tackle the shocking truth. Child of God YOU are approved by God to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. In one sense, since **Matthew 28:18-20** commands us to share the gospel, it stands to reason that we must be "approved" and "trusted" to share and live out the gospel. Yet, if this is the case,

what exactly did I do to “earn” God’s approval and trust?
Nothing is the clear answer...I didn’t earn His approval and trust nor was it in any way merited. His approval and trust are two more of the many gifts God gives His children.

- i. Well, Child of God what are we doing with His “approval” and “trust”? Are you living it out **OR** are we squandering this precious gift from our Heavenly Father?

B. Next let’s consider Paul’s framing of several warnings:

- i. In vs 4, he reminds us of the folly of pleasing man and the primacy of pleasing God. The contrast between the two is great for as we are reminded in **Jeremiah 17:9**, unlike our holy God who calls us to be like Him, the hearts of man are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

What’s more, while most of us enjoy the immediacy of validation that comes with pleasing man, Paul reminds us that it is God who tests our hearts...it is to God that we are accountable.

- ii. In v5, NO flattering words. The idea for flattery (kolakeia) here does not primarily mean what we think of today is saying super nice things. Kolakeia carries with the idea of letting popular opinion define truth.
- iii. Further, in stark contrast with the false teachers, here in v5 and 6, Paul notes that he and his posse were neither pretending NOR playing the Apostle testimony card for personal gain such as food, lodging, money, and fame.
- iv. At the end of v5, Paul’s noting that God is witness serves at least two purposes. First, it reminds them (and us) that all are accountable to God for He is sovereign. Second, Paul’s words serve as a high calling needing settling in our hearts...that is, we can know that by God’s approval

and trust, we are able to conduct our lives with Godly motivation, commitment, and character.

Slide 8

III. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12: Walk Worthy of God

1. In these verses, Paul shifts his framing of a Christians conduct, commitment, and character from denials to affirmations. *I hope you don't miss what God is doing in our passage today*; He is using the Thessalonian church and Paul's posse to reveal His will and plan that we may, together, know and purpose to walk worthy of Him.
2. The first thing to note is NOT only was Paul faithful in sharing the gospel to others, he never stopped preaching the gospel to himself.

Further, despite not knowing the Thessalonians well, he genuinely cared about their faith and growth as children of God and NOT what they could do for him. *He was greatly concerned about others exploiting them for selfish gain AND was careful to not add to their burdens*. In v9, he notes their life burdens and wanted them to know their (and our) suffering for the gospel is NOT in vain...in fact, it is instrumental in God's plan. *In being a Godly example for you and I, Paul's biblical love for the Thessalonian church had given him to pour himself out for a number of reasons, including:*

Slide 10

- i. First, he was continuing as a model of pleasing God by living a life worthy of God...this was a "follow me as I follow Christ moment". *Am I? Are we?*
- ii. Second, as discussed back in chapter 1, the Thessalonians had already been imitating Christ, so Paul's words here in chapter 2 also served as a powerful encouragement. *The Thessalonians had NOT only received the word, but they were imparting or giving the word, really life itself, in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Am I? Are we?*

- iii. Third, Paul had and would continue to pour himself out against ANYTHING that maligns or otherwise wars against the word of God AND their hope in Jesus. *Am I? Are we?*

- 3. While noticeable in earlier verses, vs 10-12 seemingly shouts “defensiveness”. *But, Paul was not defending himself in the flesh. He was defending God’s work in him.* He was not defending his name, but the hope that was in him. *He was zealous for the name above all names.* Paul wanted his testimony to be true in reflecting the One that saves and sanctifies. *He wanted to please God.* As with us, Paul’s motivations were reflected in his conduct, commitment, and character – his testimony.

Slide 12

- A. In using his words AND life as a testimony of the mighty work of the gospel, Paul was reminding, encouraging, and exhorting them as to where they were, how far they had traveled, and to stay the course. *They were doing great, but the journey of their transformation in becoming increasingly Christlike was not yet done.*
- B. Scripture says that we are known by the love we have for one another and by the biblical fruit in our lives. *These things are expressions of and only possible through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in children of God;* those having received and purposing to walk worthy of the One who saved and sanctifies us. *More on this shortly.*

- 4. Verses 11-12 offers three compelling points for the Thessalonians and the CCAikenites. *We will use these points to close.* They include (1) Paul pastored and they responded, (2) *Walking worthy of Jesus,* and (3) It is God that calls, approves, and trusts us to fulfill His mission for us.

Slide 14

- A. First up, Paul pastored them – he led with Godly conduct, commitment, and character AND they responded. *He was firm and uncompromising, but gentle and kind in being God’s vessel*

of His transforming love. Paul was not walking in “boss-ship or lord-ship” over people’s lives...he was pointing them (and us) to Christ.

- i. He exhorted them by calling them to his side, appealing to them, encouraging them, and urging them to be Christlike.
- ii. He comforted them, both in consoling them AND in cheering them in their difficulties.
- iii. Paul charged them to testify, witness, affirm, and otherwise speak, impart, and live the gospel. In short, he relayed God’s high and holy calling of “being” the church.

B. Second, Paul’s heart for them, indeed God’s heart for them, is that they will walk worthy of God. For you see, to be a child of God is a high calling. We, whose starting point is being dead in our sins (Eph 2), have been graciously given new life. We who confess Christ and walk a life worthy of Him know Him experientially and His promises (on this side of heaven and for all eternity) are our inheritance.

If you are wondering how to walk worthy of God, let’s see what He says...let me give you a warning before we go there: This is NOT complicated, but it is hard...hard to give up the old passions, lusts, and desires...hard to die to oneself...hard to hear and value God more than our own wants and the worlds lies.

Slide 16

- i. In Philippians 1:27-30, the NLT translation offers a Godly vision of walking worthy of Jesus.

²⁷ Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. ²⁸ Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. ²⁹ For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. ³⁰ We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.

- Philippians 1:27–30, NLT

ii. Scripture not only tells us why we are to live a life worthy of our LORD and Savior, but is also replete with how and how NOT to do so. **Importantly, while it will be hard, we don't need to guess or wonder who we are, about our value, or how to conduct our lives.** Here are just a couple of the many related Scriptures...

- In **Eph 5:2 and 16**, we read that only comes with walking in God's transforming love AND in the Spirit.
- **Ephesians 5:15-16** tells us that stewarding of your time and opportunities matters. Where your mind, heart, and body are invested IS spiritually consequential. Turn with me to **Colossians 3:12-17** which builds on our part of living a life worthy of Jesus...

Slide 18

¹² Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. - Colossians 3:12–17

C. Finally, it is the God of the Thessalonians and CCAikenites that calls us into the fulness of our relationship with Himself. It is Him that approves and trusts us to be His faithful servants and ambassadors. Whether already saved or still searching, what remains is our choice to faithfully, lovingly, joyfully, and obediently follow Him OR NOT?!

What say you?!

[Prayer]

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Christian Conduct, Commitment, and Character

I. Introduction: Fit for the Masters Use

- God shapes us through hardships.

Additional Scripture References: 1 Cor 2:3

II. 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6: Approved and Trusted by God

- Revealing and building righteous motivations, conduct, and commitment.
- With God's approval and trust, we are able to live with Godly motivation, commitment, and character.

Additional Scripture References: Mt 28:18-20; Jer 17:9

III. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12: Walk Worthy of God

- Our suffering for the gospel is NOT in vain...in fact, it is instrumental in God's plan.
- One's motivations are reflected in our conduct, commitment, and character.
- Where you mind, heart, and body are invest is spiritually consequential.

Additional Scripture References: Phil 1:27-30; Eph 5:2, 16; 15; Col 3:12-17

5-Day Devotional

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Christian Conduct, Commitment, and Character

Day 1: Approved and Trusted By God

Reading: 1 Thes 2:1-6

Devotional: You are approved by God. Let that truth settle deep into your heart today. Not because of your accomplishments or eloquence, but because of His grace. Paul reminds us that our motivation for ministry flows from divine approval, not human applause. God has entrusted you with the gospel—the most precious treasure in existence. This calling costs something: comfort, relationships, worldly favor. Yet what we gain infinitely surpasses what we surrender.

Today, examine your motivations. Are you seeking to please people or God? Remember, He tests your heart and finds you worthy through Christ. Walk in the confidence of His approval, sharing His truth without flattery or pretense, motivated solely by love for the One who first loved you.

Day 2: Gentle Strength in Ministry

Reading: 1 Thes 2:7-9, Gal 4:19

Devotional: Paul's ministry combined the gentleness of a nursing mother with the strength of a laboring father. This beautiful paradox reveals God's heart for His people. True spiritual leadership never exploits or burdens others but pours itself out sacrificially. Paul worked night and day, supporting himself while sharing not just the gospel but his very life. Consider how you invest in others. Are you modeling Christlikeness through both your words and your life? Biblical love moves beyond mere information transfer to life transformation. It costs us time, energy, and vulnerability.

Today, ask God to show you someone who needs both your gentle encouragement and your faithful example. Be willing to share not only truth but yourself, imitating Christ who gave everything for you.

Day 3: Walking Worthy of Your Calling

Reading: Phil 1:27-30, Eph 4:1-3

Devotional: To walk worthy of God is to live in alignment with the extraordinary calling you have received. You were dead in sin; now you are alive in Christ. This transformation demands a transformed life. Walking worthy is not complicated, but it is costly. It requires dying to old passions, surrendering selfish desires, and valuing God above the world's empty promises. Your conduct should reflect the gospel you profess. This means humility, gentleness, patience, and unity with fellow believers. It means standing firm in one spirit, striving together for the faith without being frightened by opposition. Suffering for Christ's sake is part of this worthy walk—not as punishment but as privilege.

Today, evaluate your daily conduct. Does your life testify to the transforming power of the gospel you claim to believe?

Day 4: Gospel in Suffering

Reading: 1 Thes 2:10-12, 2 Cor 4:7-12

Devotional: God uses difficulties to reveal Himself, build faith, and make you more Christlike. Paul's life demonstrated that suffering is woven into God's redemptive plan. The Thessalonians faced relentless persecution, yet Paul exhorted them to stand firm, knowing their suffering was not meaningless. In your trials, God is at work. Your difficulties become testimonies of His sustaining grace and transforming power. When hardship comes, you have a choice: let the enemy sideline you or rise up and testify to God's goodness even in the storm. Your perseverance encourages others and glorifies God.

Today, reflect on your current struggles. How might God be using them to deepen your faith and display His glory? Trust that He who called you is faithful.

Day 5: Living the Gospel

Reading: 1 Thes 2:13, Jam 1:22-25

Devotional: There is a profound difference between "doing church" and "being the church." The Thessalonians received God's word not as human philosophy but as divine truth that actively worked within them. They became imitators of Christ, not merely hearers of sermons. The gospel demands more than intellectual agreement; it requires life transformation. You are called to embody the truth you profess—to be a living epistle read by all. This means your relationships, work, speech, and character should all reflect Christ's presence within you. The Holy Spirit empowers you to impart life to others, not just information.

Today, honestly assess: Are you simply attending religious activities, or are you actively living out your faith? Purpose today to be the church—loving sacrificially, speaking truth boldly, and walking humbly with your God.

Small Group Study Guide

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Christian Conduct, Commitment, and Character

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. Gospel-Centered Motivation: Our motivation comes from Christ and the Gospel, not from circumstances, emotions, or seeking human approval.
2. Approved and Trusted by God: Every believer is approved and trusted by God to share the Gospel—this is a gift, not something we earned.
3. Walk Worthy of God: We are called to live lives that reflect our high calling as children of God through our conduct, commitment, and character.
4. Being vs. Doing Church: We're called to "be" the church, not just "do" church activities.
5. The Gospel Costs Something: Following Christ costs us our old lives, certain relationships, and worldly comforts.

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

1. Understanding God's Approval: What does it mean to you personally that God has "approved" and "trusted" you to share the Gospel? How does knowing this change the way you view evangelism or sharing your faith?
2. Pleasing God vs Pleasing People: In what areas of your life are you most tempted to please people rather than God? What are some practical differences between flattery (letting popular opinion define truth) and genuine encouragement?
3. Examining Our Motivations: Paul lists several wrong motivations: deceit, impurity, trickery, flattery, greed, and seeking glory from people. Which of these do you find most challenging to guard against? How can we regularly examine our hearts to ensure our motivations honor God?

4. Gentle Yet Firm Leadership: Paul describes being both gentle (like a nursing mother) and firm (exhorting, charging). How do we balance grace and truth in our relationships? Who in your life models this balance well? What can you learn from them?
5. Cost of the Gospel: The sermon states: "The gospel costs each of us something." What has following Christ cost you personally? How has God used those losses to draw you closer to Him or strengthen your faith?
6. Imitating Christ: Paul says "follow me as I follow Christ." Who are you following? Who is following you? What aspects of your life would you be comfortable having others imitate?
7. Being vs Doing Church: What's the difference between "doing" church and "being" the church? How can our small group better "be" the church to one another and our community?

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

1. Examine Your Motivations: Spend 15 minutes in prayer asking God to reveal any areas where you're seeking human approval rather than His. Journal what He reveals.
2. Share the Gospel: Identify one person in your life who needs to hear about Jesus. Pray for them daily and look for an opportunity to share.
3. Be the Church: Reach out to someone in the group or church who is struggling. Offer practical help, encouragement, or simply your presence.
4. Imitate Christ: Choose one characteristic of Jesus (patience, compassion, truthfulness, etc.) and intentionally practice it in your daily interactions.
5. Preach the Gospel to Yourself: Like Paul, commit to reminding yourself of the Gospel daily. Write out key truths and review them each morning.

Closing Prayer Points:

- Thank God for approving and trusting us with the Gospel
- Pray for courage to live lives worthy of our calling
- Ask for the Holy Spirit's power to transform our motivations, conduct, and character
- Pray for opportunities to "be" the church this week
- Intercede for those in the group facing persecution, difficulty, or spiritual warfare

Discussion Questions

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Christian Conduct, Commitment, and Character

1. Paul experienced tremendous persecution yet continued to preach the gospel faithfully. What current difficulties in your life might God be using to reveal Himself, build your faith, and make you more Christlike?
2. The sermon emphasizes that every Christ-follower is called into ministry, not just pastors or church leaders. How are you actively being a vibrant part of the body of Christ in your daily life?
3. Paul warns against letting popular opinion define truth and seeking to please man rather than God. In what areas of your life are you most tempted to prioritize human approval over God's approval?
4. The passage states that God has approved and trusted you to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. How does this truth challenge or change the way you view your responsibility to share your faith?
5. Paul notes that the gospel costs us our very lives, including relationships, man-favor, and old comforts. What has following Christ cost you, and how has that sacrifice been worth it?
6. The sermon asks whether we are living out God's approval and trust or squandering this precious gift. What honest assessment would you give of your current stewardship of this calling?
7. Paul poured himself out for the Thessalonians not for what they could do for him, but out of genuine care for their faith and growth. Who in your life needs this kind of selfless, gospel-centered investment right now?
8. Walking worthy of God includes doing justly, loving mercy, walking humbly, being holy in conduct, and walking as Jesus walked. Which of these aspects of worthy living is most challenging for you personally?
9. The sermon states that being the church rather than just doing church requires us to testify of God's goodness, holiness, righteousness, and healing. What is the difference between these two approaches in practical terms?
10. Paul defended not himself but God's work in him and the hope that was in him. When faced with criticism or opposition, do you find yourself defending your own reputation or pointing others to Christ?

Dinner Conversation Starters

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Christian Conduct, Commitment, and Character

1. Approved and Trusted by God

Paul said believers are “approved by God” to share the gospel. How does it affect the way we see ourselves if we really believe God has trusted us with His message? Where might God be asking our family to live this out—at school, work, or in our neighborhood?

2. The Cost of the Gospel

The sermon said the gospel “costs us something”—comfort, man-favor, sometimes relationships. Can you think of a time when following Jesus cost you something? How did that experience shape your faith or character?

3. Being the Church, Not Doing Church

Paul didn’t just “do” church; he “was” the church and genuinely cared for people. What does it look like for our family to “be the church” to each other and to others? Is there one practical way we could show Christlike love or encouragement this week?

4. Walking Worthy of God

The sermon emphasized “walking worthy of God.” If you had to describe a “walk worthy of God” in your own words, what would you say? What is one small, specific change each of us could make this week to better walk worthy of Him?

5. God Using Hard Things

Paul’s hardships were used by God to build his faith and make him more Christlike. What is a hard situation we’ve faced recently (as individuals or as a family)? Can we see any ways God might be using that difficulty to grow our conduct, commitment, or character?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Christian Conduct, Commitment, and Character

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Jesus Made You Part of His Family**: God has “approved” us in Jesus. Little kids don’t need the word “approved,” but they can understand, “Jesus picked you to be on His team.” Remember at school or on a team: “I belong to Jesus, and He is with me.” When someone is left out, you can show them Jesus’ love by being kind.

Discussion Question: “When you are at school or playing with friends, how can you remember that you are on Jesus’ team?” “Has there ever been a time someone was left out? What could you do next time to show them Jesus’ love?”

2. **Telling the Truth Even When Its Hard**: Paul didn’t use “flattery” or pretend to be something he wasn’t. Kids can learn that following Jesus means telling the truth and not pretending just to get people to like us. Don’t say things you don’t really mean just to make someone like you. Tell the truth, even if you might get in trouble.

Discussion Question: “Have you ever said something just because you thought a friend would like you more? How did that feel inside?” “What could you say to a friend if they want you to say or do something you know is not right?”

3. **Being Kind and Gentle**: Paul was gentle and kind with the Thessalonians. Kids this age can think, “How can I be gentle and kind like that?” Use gentle words with siblings and friends. If someone is sad or hurt, try to comfort them instead of ignoring them.

Discussion Question: “What are some kind words you could say to a friend who is sad or left out?” “Can you think of one way to be gentle with your brother/sister this week when you feel angry?”

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Choosing to Please God Over Friends**: Paul chose to please God instead of people. Kids 8–12 are starting to feel peer pressure strongly. When friends laugh at someone, you can choose not to join in, even if it costs you “cool points.” When a friend wants you to cheat or lie, you can say, “I follow Jesus, and I don’t want to do that.”

Discussion Question: “Can you remember a time your friends wanted you to do something you knew was wrong? What did you do?” “What are some ways kids your age try to get ‘man-favor’ (likes, laughs, popularity)? How could you choose to please God instead?”

2. **Being the Church Around Your Friends**: The sermon said not just to “do church” but to “be the church.” Kids can practice this by how they treat their friends. Look for someone alone at recess or lunch and invite them to play or sit with you. Be the one who encourages others on your team or in your club, not just the one who wants to shine.

Discussion Question: “In your class or team, who might feel invisible or left out? What’s one thing you could do this week to include them?” “If your group chat started making fun of someone, what’s one thing you could say or do to ‘be the church’ instead of just going along?”

3. **Walking Worthy in Everyday Choices**: “Walk worthy of God” means our daily choices show we belong to Jesus—at home, school, and online. Think before posting or sending a message: “Would I be okay if Jesus read this?” Use your time (phone, YouTube, games, TV) in a way that honors God, not just whatever feels good.

Discussion Question: “If someone looked at all your texts, comments, or game chats, what do you think they would learn about your character?”
“What’s one change you could make this week in how you use screens that would show you want to walk worthy of God?”

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **God’s Approval VS Others**: Paul said he was “approved by God” and didn’t chase human approval. Teens are constantly confronted with likes, views, and social ranking. Before posting or commenting, ask: “Am I doing this for God’s glory or just for attention/approval?” Refuse to share or like content that is cruel, sexualized, or dishonoring to God, even if it’s what everyone else is doing. Don’t change your values to keep a friend group or boyfriend/girlfriend. Your worth is rooted in Christ, not in being accepted by a specific person.

Discussion Question: “Where do you most feel the pressure to get approval—school, sports, social media, friend groups? How does that pressure show up?”
“If you really believed God has already ‘approved’ you in Christ, what is one thing you might stop doing for attention or popularity?”

2. **The Cost of the Gospel in Friendships**: The sermon said the gospel costs us something—comfort, man-favor, even relationships. Early teens start to face this in deeper ways. You might lose friends or be left out because you won’t participate in gossip, sexting, cheating, or cruel jokes. You may have to step away from group chats or circles that constantly drag others down.

Discussion Question: “What are some real examples where following Jesus might cost someone your age popularity or relationships?”
“Is there a relationship, group chat, or online habit that you feel God might be asking you to change or walk away from to ‘walk worthy’? What scares you about that? What might be the good that could come from it?”

3. **Being a Christ-Like Influence, Not a Blind Follower**: Paul modeled Christ and invited others to imitate him. Teens can move from “fitting in” to actually leading by example. Be the one who refuses gossip and speaks up kindly when someone is trashed behind their back. Invite others to youth group, church, or a Bible study—even if it feels awkward. Use your platforms (social media accounts, group chats) to share encouragement, Scripture, or testimony when appropriate.

Discussion Question: “If your friends copied your behavior—online and offline—would they be moving closer to Jesus or farther away? Why?”

“What’s one practical way you could be more of a Christlike leader in your friend group this month (in person or online)?”

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 2:1-12

Christian Conduct, Commitment, and Character

1. Approved by God Not Needing Others Approval

Bible Reference: 1 Thessalonians 2:4 – “But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God...”

Application: Your core identity is that you are already “approved” in Christ. That means you don’t have to twist your beliefs, morals, or personality just to get likes, views, or acceptance. You live for God’s “Well done,” not for everyone else’s “You’re cool.”

Scenario: You’re in a group chat where people start roasting someone who’s not there, sharing screenshots and memes making fun of them. You know it’s wrong, but everyone else is reacting with laughing emojis and “L” comments. You feel the pull to join in so you don’t look boring or “too serious.”

Discussion:

What would it look like, practically, to “please God, not people” in that moment?

What is one sentence you could type that would honor God without being self-righteous or harsh?

How might remembering “I’m already approved by God” help you handle the fear of being excluded or mocked?

2. Resisting Peer Pressure in Group Settings

Bible Reference: Luke 9:23 – “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

1 Thessalonians 2:2 – “...we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.”

Application: Following Jesus will cost you something: comfort, popularity, sometimes relationships. Choosing purity, honesty, and Christlike love means sometimes saying “no” to what everyone else says “yes” to.

Scenario: You're talking to someone you like. They begin asking for nudes or pushing sexual jokes and comments in DMs. They say, "If you really liked me, you'd trust me," and add that "everyone does it" and "it's private."

Discussion:

How does "taking up your cross" apply when you're pressured to go against God's standards in a relationship?

What boundaries would honor God with your body and your digital behavior (pics, messages, flirting)?

If you lost this relationship because you honored Jesus, would it be worth it in light of eternity? Why?

3. No Flattery, No Fake Persona

Bible Reference: 1 Thessalonians 2:5 – "For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness..."

Ephesians 4:25 – "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor...'"

Application: Don't present a fake self to gain followers or acceptance. No "flattery" means you're not manipulating people with your words or persona—online or offline. Your content, comments, and conversations should reflect honesty and integrity.

Scenario: On Instagram, TikTok, or Snapchat, you're tempted to post thirst traps, exaggerate your lifestyle, or craft a persona that isn't really you, just to grow your account or impress a certain group.

Discussion:

In what ways can social media tempt you to "use flattering words" or a "cloak" to get attention?

How can you tell if your online self is becoming more about image than about truth?

What would it look like for your digital presence to match who you actually are in Christ?

4. Being the Church Not Just Doing Church

Bible Reference: 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8 – “...we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children... we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives...”

John 13:35 – “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Application: You’re not called just to attend church; you’re called to “be the church” in your friend groups, teams, and online spaces—showing real love, gentleness, and sacrifice.

Scenario: At school or on your team, there’s that one person everyone sees as “weird” or “annoying.” They’re always alone at lunch and rarely invited into group hangouts or Discord calls. Being seen with them might cost you social capital.

Discussion:

How could you “impart your own life” (time, attention, friendship) to someone who is usually excluded?

What is one specific action—this week—that would reflect Christ’s love to that person?

How might your friend group or youth group culture change if everyone decided to “be the church” instead of just blending in?

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.