

## 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 | Called to Excellence

God calls us to live out our faith with excellence... In our passage, Paul will use the phrase: “*do this even more*” to speak of excellence.

- **Meaning of Excellence:** The quality of doing our absolute best. For the Christian, excellence is the path of sustained spiritual growth.

**Passage premise:** The ministry that we do inside the church must have Christ as its foundation and must ultimately serve to prepare us to reach the lost with Christ’s love outside the church.

**v.1:** The church responded well to Paul’s earlier instruction on how they should live and please God. Then he challenges them to do this even more. They should take their love for Jesus to the next level.

- **Pastor Paul** loved them too much to leave them where they were.
- **Coach Paul** challenged them to up their game. They cannot rest on their reputation.

**4:2:** Paul says *For you know what commands we gave you thru the Lord Jesus.*

- Truths Paul taught came from Jesus Himself; the church will do well to practice them.

**Key Point:** Willing obedience is one of the ways that we show our love for God.

**4:3-7:** *For this is God’s will... your sanctification.* Two meanings of sanctification:

1. Our new position in Christ. God declares us right with Him based on our faith in Christ.
2. The lifelong process where the Holy Spirit guides and empowers us to become like Jesus. Paul is talking about this one.

Paul explains that sanctification involves devoted effort in three specific areas. With a common theme. A believer must take great care not to defile their body:

1. Keep away from sexual immorality (4:3).
  - a. Leviticus 18 (Do not defile yourself)
2. Learn to control your own body (4:4-5).
  - a. The Holy Spirit empowers our self-control. He wants to help us!
3. Do not sin against or take advantage of another believer. (4:6). By sexual sin.

**4:7:** *For God has not called us to impurity but to live in holiness.* God calls us to holiness.

**4:8:** *Anyone who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit:*

- Anyone who rejects God’s call to holiness is not rejecting Paul but is rejecting God Himself.
- God gave His Spirit to guide us to divine truths and to also empower our obedience.

**4:9-12:** Love is the foundational virtue of our faith. God’s love is rooted in the cross, it defines us; it compels us, it is inside of us, and love is evidence that the Holy Spirit has raised us from death to life.

- In its “perfected” form, love is our witness to those outside our doors. In other words...
- Perfecting God’s love inside equips us to take Christ’s love outside into our community.

Paul gives three ways in which they can up their game with respect to love. They are to:

1. Seek to lead a quiet life;
2. Mind their own business;
3. Work with their own hands.

God uses our personal testimony to reconcile people to Him, which is another way we show God that we love Him.

### Grow Group Questions:

1. What do you think about the concept of excellence as applied to the Christ follower?
2. How can excellence be used to overcome complacency within the body of Christ?
3. How can we be more intentional about avoiding defiling our body with sin?
4. How can we be more loving toward others in our church?
5. What are some ways that we can bring the love of Christ into our community?
6. What are some hindrances that could impact our bringing the love of Christ into our community? How can we overcome them?