

Worksheet #5: 1 Thessalonians 4:1–12 (NKJV)

Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God;² for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

³For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,⁵ not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;⁶ that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.⁸ Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

⁹But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;¹⁰ and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;¹¹ that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,¹² that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and *that* you may lack nothing.

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. In vv. 1 and 10, Paul encourages the Thessalonians to “abound/increase more and more” in certain things. In what virtues does Paul call the Thessalonians to increase, from the context? Why the repeated references to “more and more”?

2. Three times in this passage Paul refers to things he previously taught the Thessalonians (vv. 2, 6, and 11). How do these references to the church’s collective memory instruct us about how we should absorb pastoral teaching?

3. What does Paul identify as the “will of God” for the Thessalonians in v. 3? How should an understanding of this larger goal shape our sexual ethic?

4. How does a proper sexual ethic contrast with the social norms of unredeemed society (v. 5)? What does such a contrast highlight about Christian identity?

5. How could licentious behavior cause believers to “take advantage of and defraud” other “brothers” (v. 6)? In this context, is “brothers” a reference to other believers generally, or specifically to other men? Explain your answer.

6. What is God’s goal for believers, as described in v. 7, and what is the means he has given to believers for achieving that goal (v. 8)?

7. Compare Paul’s teaching in vv. 3–8 with 1 Corinthians 6:15–20. What are some similarities and differences that you can observe in these two passages?

8. What are Paul’s concrete objectives for the Thessalonians in vv. 10b–11? What are the anticipated results (v. 12)?

Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?
