



Sermon Discussion Questions

May 26, 2024

Like a Thief in the Night

ALIGNMENT (IN THE AGE OF RAPTURE)

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

1. Opening Discussion Questions (in a group setting you may only want to do one of these)

- a. If you are studying in a group spend a few minutes developing a “Top 10 Rules for Getting along With Others” list. Is the list you came up with one that you would be comfortable implementing in your life? What is the most important rule for getting along with others?
- b. An author once wrote about Christians: “People in the church are like porcupines in a snowstorm. We need each other to keep warm, but we prick each other if we get too close.” In what ways do you think his statement accurately reflects life in an American church in 2024? Christ regularly compared us not to porcupines but to sheep. What characteristics do you see in our church most often – those of sheep or of porcupines?

2. Sermon Outline/Key Points

- a. Align Yourself with Fellow Believers
 - i. Paul addresses how to relate to one another in the local church.
 - ii. Respect and love church leaders.
 - iii. Bring the best out of each other in the way of Jesus.
- b. Align Yourself with God's Will
 - i. Instructions to get and stay in God's will.
 - ii. Nurture your communication with God.
 - iii. Don't quench the Spirit!
- c. Be Holy in Anticipation of Christ's Return
 - i. Pray for your ongoing and future sanctification.
 - ii. Be confident God will accomplish this!

3. Study/Discussion Points:

- a. ***Sunday Afternoon*** – As soon as possible after listening to the sermon set aside some time to ponder these questions prayerfully:
 - i. What one thing most stood out to you in this sermon?
 - ii. What new truth did you learn or of what truth were you reminded?
 - iii. After listening to the sermon, is there a Scripture passage you feel led to meditate on or commit to memory this week?

- iv. What is one specific thing you feel God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
- v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

b. Monday – How to relate to one another in the local church.

- i. Read the sermon focal passage, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28, slowly several times, stopping to meditate on what Paul says.
 - 1. Make a list of the various issues Paul brings up in these verses.
 - 2. Based on his wording, which seems to be most important?
- ii. Paul begins by addressing those he is writing to as “brothers” (“brothers and sisters” in the NIV and CSB).
 - 1. What does this term imply about Paul’s view of the relationship they share?
 - 2. He uses the same term four more times in the focal passage (verses 14, 25, 26 and 27). What does this repetition suggest to you? What would it say about how we should relate to other Christians in our church?
- iii. The Thessalonians are told to “Be at peace among yourselves.”
 - 1. What does it mean to you as a Christian to “be at peace” with other Christians?
 - 2. Jesus gave an interesting command about peace in Mark 9:49-50. How do you think Jesus’ command relates to the situation the Thessalonians were in?

c. Tuesday – How to relate to one another in the local church.

- i. Paul begins verse 12 by “asking” and then in verse 14 shifts to “urging” (“exhorting” in the CSB).
 - 1. What does this shift imply to you?
 - 2. How should it influence the way we view the two sets of instructions?
- ii. The Thessalonians are first urged to admonish the idle. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-7 and 11.
 - 1. What do these verses suggest about the situation in Thessalonica and the effectiveness of Paul’s first instructions to them?
 - 2. The word “idle” can also be translated “disruptive”, disorderly” or “undisciplined”. What additional insight would these alternate translations give about the problem Paul is addressing? How are the four terms all related?
- iii. After admonishing the idle Paul urges that the “fainthearted” (“disheartened” in the NIV) be encouraged. What do those terms suggest to you about the type of individual Paul has in mind?

d. Wednesday – How to relate to one another in the local church.

- i. The third class of people Paul mentions in his urging are the weak. Read Romans 14:1, 15:1 and 1 Corinthians 8:7-12 & 9:22.
 1. Why would the weak be a particular concern to Paul?
 2. What additional insight does Jesus' comment to the disciples while in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 25:41 and Mark 14:38) provide?
- ii. Finally, Paul urges patience. What do these verses tell us about the nature and importance of patience?
 1. Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, Psalm 86:15, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2, Nahum 1:3, and Romans 2:4
 2. Galatians 5:22
 3. 1 Corinthians 13:4 and 1 Peter 4:8
- iii. Why would Paul's command in verse 15 have been both particularly important and especially challenging for the Thessalonian church (see 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 and 3:3-4)?

e. Thursday – Respect and love church leaders.

- i. Today concentrating on 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15. How would you summarize these four verses in just a couple of sentences?
- ii. When you read verse 12, who do you think Paul is talking about?
 1. Read Romans 16:6 & 12 and Colossians 4:12-13. Who do these passages suggest Paul may have been talking about when he says, "labor among you" ("work hard" in the NIV)? Who are some of those at LRBC that might fit this category?
 2. Read Acts 14:24, 20:17 & 28, 1 Timothy 5:17, and Hebrews 13:17. Who do these passages suggest Paul may have been talking about when he mentions those "over you" ("who care for you" in the NIV)? How would such individuals have differed from a typical pastor in an established church in America today? Who at LRBC do you see fitting into this category?
 3. Read Colossians 1:28 & 3:16 and 2 Timothy 2:2. Who should be involved in admonishing?
- iii. The word "admonish" appears twice in these verses. What does the word mean to you?
 1. How would you normally respond to someone that admonishes you?
 2. Even though they "admonish" us how does Paul say we should regard our leaders? What makes this possible?

f. Friday – Align Yourself with God's Will.

- i. Today, read and meditate on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

- ii. From a practical standpoint, verses 16, 17 and 18a may be some of the most difficult commands for a Christian to follow. Discuss what each of the three means in your lives as Christians.
 - 1. Compare Philippians 4:4 with verse 16. What additional instruction does this verse provide that may make rejoicing “easier”? Look at the last phrase of Philippians 4:3. If that is true for you why would you not rejoice?
 - 2. Verse 17 tells us to pray “without ceasing” (ESV), “continually” (NIV) or “constantly” (CSB). To you do these all imply the same thing or are there different nuances? Which seems most appropriate to you? Compare this with what Christ taught in the Parable of the Persistent Widow in Luke 18:1-8. How does this parable influence your view?
 - 3. Verse 18a commands us to “give thanks in all circumstances.” Compare this verse to Ephesians 5:19b-20 and Colossians 3:16-17. How does “giving thanks” differ from “rejoicing always”? What situations do you think the Thessalonians may have faced where the two would not be the same (see 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4)?
 - iii. Christians frequently say that they want to know “What is God’s will for my life.” How does verse 18b answer that question? If we are faithfully obeying the three commands in verses 16, 17 and 18 how hard do you think it would be to find His will for the rest of our lives?
- g. *Saturday – Align Yourself with God’s Will.*
- i. Read and meditate on 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.
 - ii. What does it mean to you to “quench the Spirit” and to “despise (“treat with contempt” in the NIV) prophecies”? How do they relate to “abstaining from evil”? Compare Ephesians 4:29-31.
 - iii. Paul commands us to “test everything”. Read 1 John 4:1-4 and Acts 17:11. What is the standard that we are to use to test what we are told? Why is this so important in our society? What are practical applications at LRBC?
4. **Application:** Paul’s benediction to the Thessalonians in verses 23-24 serves as a great application for us as we end this series in 1 Thessalonians. Spend time this week considering carefully what Paul says. Think about what needs to change in your life so that the results will be accomplished in your walk with Christ.
5. **Prayer Points:**
- a. Adoration – Psalms 8:1 and 29:1-2
 - b. Confession – Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:8-10
 - c. Thanksgiving – Psalms 95:1-2 and 100:4-5
 - d. Supplications –Matthew 21:22 and John 16:19