



Teaching Guide
AND Essentials

- **FOR ADULTS** -



GROUP MEMBERS USE *THE BRINK*, *FUSION FAMILY*, OR *FUSION NEXT*
DEVOTIONAL STUDY GUIDES



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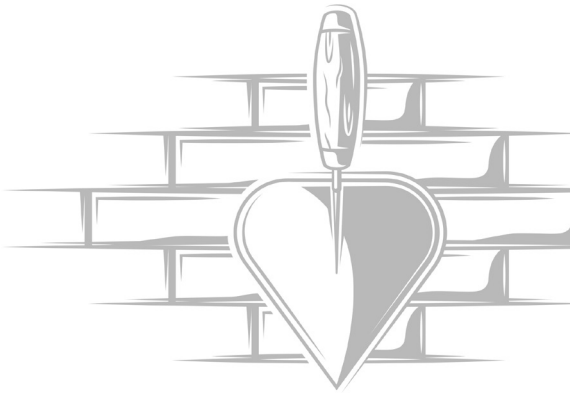


FAMILY THEME

Everyday Christian Living

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Learners put practical instructions for Christian living into practice.

STUDY TEXT: 1 Thessalonians 5:12–28



CHECKLIST

- Study the biblical text and Adult Teacher's Guide.
- Review the *Adult Teaching Outline* (Adult Handout 9-1 or AH 9-1). You can take notes on this editable document as you study. You can also use it as a guide to teach from.
- Review *PowerPoint 9* and insert your own questions if needed.
- Print and make copies of the *Adult Member Outline* (AH 9-2), the *Do Good and Avoid Evil* Handout (AH 9-3), and *Parent Page* (PP-9) if necessary.
- Distribute *Parent Page* (PP-9) to those who will benefit from it.

Key Truths

- Believers Are to Love, Respect, and Encourage One Another (1 Thessalonians 5:12–15)
- Believers Are to Practice What Is Good and Right and Abstain From Evil (1 Thessalonians 5:16–22)
- God Is Working to Make Believers Holy (1 Thessalonians 5:23–28)

Verse of the
Month

1 THESSALONIANS
2:12

CONNECT

Choose one of the **Connect** options to capture attention and get this session started.

OPTION 1: Today's lesson discusses praying without ceasing. But what does that mean? Consider showing this video from Dr. Donald Whitney: tinyurl.com/PrayCease. Discuss the video with learners. Transition to the lesson by saying: *At the end of his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul gave his readers many practical instructions for the Christian life. We'll examine those instructions today.*

OPTION 2: Ask your learners to share a piece of advice someone gave them. This could range from very serious to very silly. Perhaps learners could share one serious piece of advice and one not-so-serious piece of advice. After allowing volunteers to share, transition to the lesson: *We've all been given plenty of good advice and bad advice. As Paul closed his letter to the Thessalonians, he left them with godly advice and instruction that we can apply today.*

OPTION 3: Begin by asking your learners to list some of the practical instructions for living that set Christians apart from the lost world. After discussion, say: *God gave us instructions for how we are to live as believers. Today we will explore some of those practical instructions God gave us through Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.*

LEARN + EXPLORE + APPLY

Distribute copies of the *Adult Member Outline* (AH 9-2) and summarize the following to your group about the background of the text.

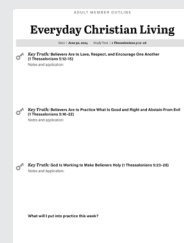
No one in the Thessalonian congregation had been a believer for very long. They, like all new believers, needed instruction in practical Christian living. Paul had sent Timothy to instruct and encourage them ([1 Thessalonians 3:1-2](#)), and now he instructed them by letter, giving them some final practical words of instruction.

KEY TRUTH: Believers Are to Love, Respect, and Encourage One Another ([1 Thessalonians 5:12-15](#))

Human relationships always need attention, even in a church. The believers had few role models of mature Christian living outside of Paul and Timothy. One issue was their relationships with their leaders. Paul insisted that people in a Christian congregation *respect* the leaders who work hard among them (**verse 12**). In Roman society the powerful had their way with the weak. The weak gave little beyond



AH 9-1



AH 9-2

TEACHING TIP

Vary the pitch, volume, and speed of your voice to improve your communication.

APPLY:

Respect, love, and follow your church leaders because of their work for the Lord and your church.



PowerPoint 9

The discussion questions can be found on the *Adult Teaching Outline* (AH 9-1) and on *PowerPoint 9*, which is customizable. Files *9A* and *9B* are provided for customization.

begrudged obedience to their masters. The *work* of the church leaders, however, merited respect and *love* (**verse 13**). This surely shocked people raised in the ways of Greece and Rome. Above all, their calling was to live in peace with each other.

DISCUSS:

- *How can we show respect and love for our church leaders?* (Seek to practice what they preach and teach; support their efforts to help the church grow and mature; pray for and encourage them in their ministry; etc.)

Treating spiritual leaders with disrespect and dishonor distracts and discourages them. The way we treat our church leaders directly affects the work of Christ. We should be careful how we discuss the church and its leaders in front of our children or grandchildren. We should try to build up the respect we want them to show the church and its leaders.

In **verse 14**, Paul instructed the congregation in how to treat three specific groups. The *idle* or *unruly* needed warning or admonishment. They were to be urged to carry out their responsibilities. It had become a sore spot in the congregation. Some may have been just plain lazy. Some dressed it up in spiritual rationale, using their waiting on the Lord's return as a pretext. Regardless, their idleness and lack of discipline were a poor testimony to unbelievers. It created friction in the congregation, making the task of the leaders all the more difficult.

We rarely hear much about dealing with timidity, yet Paul addressed it here. Perhaps the testimony of some believers suffered from their natural timidity. Unlike the opportunistic idle who needed warning, the *timid* or *fainthearted* needed encouragement. Their hearts were in the right place, even if they had trouble speaking up when needed.

The *weak* needed others to help them. We do not know what kind of weakness Paul meant. It could have been weak faith, weak resources, physical weakness, or some combination of all three. No matter— weaker people in the congregation need our patience and help, not our condemnation.

Finally, Paul urged *patience* with everyone. Not everyone faces the same obstacles. We all have different weaknesses, problems, and resources. We do not grow spiritually at the same rate. Patience demonstrates Christlikeness and is an external indication that we are becoming like Him. Living in peace with each other in our church relationships will require patience.

DISCUSS:

- *Paul urged the idle to carry out their responsibilities. What is the danger in Christians being lazy? What should our work ethic look like?*
- *In these verses, Paul told us to help the weak. Why is it tempting to condemn the weak? What does it look like to give them help and patience?*

Even in church, people sometimes feel they have been wronged. Paul instructed them not to repay evil for evil (**verse 15**). Instead, kindness to all was to mark believers (**Romans 12:14, 17–21**). It is important for us to understand that Paul’s practical advice, such as we see in today’s text, grew directly out of his doctrinal or theological understanding. God’s truth is to guide the way we live.

DISCUSS:

- *What are some examples of how we can respond to adversaries with kindness rather than retaliation?*

KEY TRUTH: Believers Are to Practice What Is Good and Right and Abstain From Evil (**1 Thessalonians 5:16–22**)

Paul’s next instructions seem to move from external acts to attitudes of the heart. Nevertheless, attitudes cannot be confined to the heart. They will always display themselves in actions.

First came *joy* (**verse 16**). People inside and outside a church can tell if an individual, or a congregation, is joyful. We cannot fake joy for long; neither can we hide it. Knowing Christ and His blessings should lead to joy.

Believers who cultivate joy will more easily give themselves to frequent *prayer* (**verse 17**). Joyful believers will more easily display *thankfulness*, even in difficult situations. Paul specified being thankful *in* all situations—not the same as being thankful *for* all situations. We do not cultivate joy, prayer, and thankfulness just to help the preacher or keep the peace. It is *God’s will* for believers (**verse 18**). When we speak to our families about *God’s will*, let us make sure we emphasize what the Bible clearly says about it. In today’s passage, we find that it is God’s will for believers to be joyful, prayerful, and thankful.

DISCUSS:

- *Describe what a life of rejoicing looks like. How can we apply this command to our lives?*

APPLY:

Urge the idle to carry out their responsibilities, encourage the timid, help the weak, and have patience with everyone.

APPLY:

Respond to adversaries with kindness rather than retaliation.

APPLY:

Live out God’s will by being joyful, prayerful, and thankful at all times.

• *Why should we be thankful even in difficult situations?* (Our sins are forgiven and Heaven awaits; God uses difficulties to help us grow and to accomplish His will; etc.) *What is the difference between giving thanks **in** all circumstances and giving thanks **for** all circumstances?*

EXPLORE:

What did Paul mean when he said to *pray without ceasing*? *Without ceasing* comes from a Greek word that means *continually* or *without omission*. Paul used this word in [Romans 1:9](#) to convey that the Roman believers were constantly on his mind, and in [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#) to indicate he constantly gave thanks for the Thessalonians. The fact that he *constantly* did these things, however, did not exclude the other things Paul thought about or gave thanks for. It simply means they came back to his mind continually. Did Paul never eat or sleep, praying every moment? Of course not! *Praying without ceasing* is what Jesus taught in the parable about the widow who sought justice ([Luke 18:1–8](#)). It means to pray consistently, on every appropriate occasion, without giving up.

Verse 19 means to *stop* putting out the Spirit's fire, indicating they were already doing so. What did Paul mean by not putting out the fire of the Spirit? The Holy Spirit works within all the believers of a congregation to do God's work. His choices and distribution of spiritual gifts might surprise us. We must be careful not to stand in the way of something the Spirit is doing among us. Some even despised prophecies from God, probably because they did not agree with God's choice of messenger (**verse 20**). Instead, Paul advised the Thessalonians to examine prophecies, and hold on to what they found good and godly (**verse 21**).

However, not all messages, teaching, or practices that teachers claimed to be from God really came from Him. Satan also worked among the congregation to sow confusion and discord. Whenever evil appeared, whatever kind of evil it might be, they were to refuse it or avoid it (**verse 22**).

EXPLORE:

Some translations speak of avoiding *the appearance of evil*, in **verse 22**. Many readers then take that to mean that if something even *looks* evil, then it must be. This text, however, speaks of something else. Translations that speak of abstaining from or avoiding every *kind or form* of evil are closer to what Paul was saying.

DISCUSS:

- *How can we hold fast to what is good?* (Identify from God's Word what is good and right and put those things into daily practice.)
- *What does it look like to avoid every kind or form of evil?*

KEY TRUTH: God Is Working to Make Believers Holy (1 Thessalonians 5:23-28)

Paul did not know if he would see the Thessalonians again or how they would receive his instructions. What else could he do for them? He could pray (**verse 23**). Paul understood that the Creator of the universe was present and active among them. His prayer that God would set them apart for His service and make them more like Christ was not a prayer of last resort. Prayer was Paul's primary resource for the congregation because Paul understood God's faithfulness (**verse 24**). He prayed for believers to surrender all they are, their entire person, to God and His service.

DISCUSS:

- *How does God work to set us apart and make us more like Christ?* (Uses His Word and circumstances to grow and teach us; helps us keep ourselves from sin; etc.)
- *Why is holiness much more important than personal wealth, popularity, and prestige?*

We have in the final verses (**verses 25-28**) an image of a very close relationship between Paul and the congregation. He wanted them to pray for him. He wanted those who first received the letter to pass it along with a family greeting to the rest of the believers. He wanted to make sure someone read it to all the congregation. Paul understood that what he had written was important for their walks with God. He wanted everyone to profit from what the Holy Spirit inspired Him to write. He knew that attending to what he had written would facilitate their experience of God's grace.

Verse 27 makes it clear Paul wanted his words to be read aloud to the entire congregation. This could have happened at one large meeting, or it could have happened multiple times among smaller groups or households of believers. The important thing to consider is that Paul *intended* his words to be distributed and read. He recognized his writing as an extension of his ministry. His letters could go places he could not. People could copy them (and they did). People could read them at odd or otherwise inconvenient hours, according to their own needs.

APPLY:

Hold to and practice all that is good and avoid all that is evil.

APPLY:

Ask God to make you more like Christ. Then do the things that will help that to happen.

APPLY:

Take in God's Word at home, at church, and as you move about in order to grow in your faith.

DISCUSS:

- *Knowing and understanding God's Word is vital to spiritual growth. What are various ways we can learn and grow in our knowledge of the Bible?*
- *Paul knew God's Word had to be shared, and he did this through traveling, writing, and speaking. What are some ways we should be sharing God's Word with others?*

Paul's personal or face-to-face ministry made his writing ministry more powerful. Because of what he *did*, what he *wrote* carried more weight. Through inspired writing, Paul (and the other apostles) traveled out among God's churches, ministering then, and through the ages, to many more than they ever could have addressed in person.

RESPOND

Use one or more of these **Respond** options to help your group members put into action the principles they learned in this lesson.

OPTION 1: Paul encouraged his readers to pray without ceasing. This is a great instruction for us as well. If your group members don't have a regular prayer time, encourage them to schedule a daily prayer time. Also, while a daily prayer time is great, we also have the ability to pray throughout the day. Remind group members of this amazing tool and challenge them to communicate with God as they go about their daily responsibilities.

OPTION 2: Discuss how we are instructed to do what is good and avoid what is evil. Ask your learners to identify some good things they could do and some evil things they could avoid. Encourage them to put at least one item from each list into practice this week. AH 9-3 *Do Good and Avoid Evil* can help your learners think through these things.

OPTION 3: Ask and discuss the following:

- *How will you show love and respect for a church leader this week?*
- *Whom could you admonish, encourage, or help this week? In what way could you do so?*
- *With whom do you need to be patient this week?*

Encourage your learners to put one or two of these ideas into action this week.



AH 9-3

Building Blocks

Share these Bible basics with your learners.

Sanctification is the lifelong process Christians begin at conversion where they become more like Christ.

Pray!

Encourage your group members to complete the daily devotions in the D6 devotional magazines this week.



PP-9

The *Parent Page* (PP-9) is a resource to help parents discuss the truths of this lesson with their children at home. Give copies of this page to those who will benefit from it and encourage them to use it at home this week. *Parent Page* is also available for FREE download at D6home.com. (No password required.)

Notes

