



# Bible Study

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12



Canadian Lutheran  
World Relief

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## CLWR BIBLE STUDIES

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CLWR's Bible Studies have been designed to help congregations delve deeper into the challenges leading to injustices around the world, to explore related Bible stories, to discuss how these connect and how God calls us to act together.

These studies are meant to be adapted for your congregation's needs and are free to use. Each study includes discussion questions for children to adults, as well as suggestions to connect this discussion to action.

As CLWR continues to grow our resource collection, we would love to hear suggestions and insight from you. Please feel free to contact Heidi Van Schaik, our Church Relations Manager at [heidi@clwr.org](mailto:heidi@clwr.org) with ideas and feedback.

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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- This text is one of the letters attributed to the Apostle Paul to the churches he founded.
- This church is found in Thessalonica in Macedonia in the northern part of Greece.
- The senders of the letter are identified as Paul, Silvanus and Timothy:
  - Silvanus AKA Silas was a companion of Paul's, a fellow missionary, you will remember him from the story of Paul and Silas' arrest in Philippi, where they were imprisoned and were freed by an earthquake.
  - Timothy is a young companion of and missionary with Paul and Silas.
- This letter is regarded as Paul's second missive (after his letter to Galatia) to one of his church plants and usually dated between 49–51 CE.
- Paul's letters follow a typical format:
  - Salutation (to, from, greeting, thanksgiving/blessing)
  - Body (exhortation, theory, theological discussion, admonition)
  - Conclusion (practical issues, personal greetings, prayer)
- This study will focus on 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 (Ethical Instructions for a Christian Life).

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## CULTURAL CONTEXT

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- The people of Thessalonica were likely predominantly Gentiles who worshiped various Greek, Roman and Egyptian gods prior to Paul's arrival.
- While there was a small Jewish community in the town, Paul doesn't mention them in his letters, leading us to believe there weren't many converts in this ministry endeavour.
- It is suspected, on account of Paul's discussing his own hard labour, that the community is made up of poor labourers rather than aristocrats.
- The Romans are still in power in this area, and are still persecuting those proclaiming the good news of Jesus and the followers of the Apostle's.

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## SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

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- Paul, Silvanus and Timothy have left the community, being run out of town by a group of angry Jewish people (see Acts 17:5).
- Timothy returned to visit, sent by Paul to check on the community of Thessalonica to ensure that they are continuing strong in faith, and had returned, bringing word of their continued faith and devotion (1 Thess. 3:2-6).

## 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

*It is advisable to read the entire letter, but this study will focus on 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12*

### Living to Please God

As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. **2** For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

**3** It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; **4** that each of you should learn to control your own body [a] in a way that is holy and honorable, **5** not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; **6** and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. [b] The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. **7** For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. **8** Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

**9** Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. **10** And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, **11** and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, **12** so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

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## STUDY

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Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

In verse 1, Paul suggests that the Thessalonians are living well and pleasing God.

*What does 'pleasing God' mean to you?*

*What does Paul suggest is pleasing to God?*

- See chapter 2:4

*When someone affirms their faith (is confirmed), what are the promises they and the community supporting them make?*

- Read the liturgy for this service in your church's worship book, reflect on the promises.
- Live among God's faithful people, hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper, proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serve all people, following the example of Jesus and strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

*How do these promises connect us to what Paul is suggesting to the Thessalonians?*

*What does the word "sanctification" mean?*

- to be blessed, set apart, made holy for God's purposes

*What does Paul suggest that the Thessalonian community is set apart for?  
(v. 3b-6a)*

- No fornication
- Knowledge of how to control one's own body
- No lustful passion
- No wronging or exploiting of a brother or sister

*Paul's list is very negative. How could we turn these into positive statements? (v.9b)*

- Loving and caring for one another

*How is your parish community positively 'sanctified'?*

*For what purpose do you think God has positively 'sanctified' you?*

- This is a hard and deeply personal question. If people aren't feeling safe, perhaps using a private method of noting this would be more helpful than speaking it out loud. Journal it in your personal Bible, write it on a piece of paper, spend a few moments thinking about it.

In verse 10, Paul tells the community that they know how and have been loving those around them well, but also urges them to 'do more'.

*How do you think your parish community shows love to one another?*

*How does it show love to 'outsiders'?*

*How do you show love to others?*

Did you know that February is Heart Month- a time to bring attention to the importance of cardiovascular health, and what we can do to reduce our risk of cardiovascular disease?

- Lifestyle changes, small and big, can help reduce your risk. These include things such as eating healthier, getting proper sleep, being physically active, managing your stress and limiting your alcohol intake.
- Acting ‘on improving our day-to-day choices, biological, environmental, and socio-economic factors also influence our risk of heart disease.’
- Did you know that there is a direct link between Diabetes and heart disease and stroke?
- Diabetes increases the risk of high blood pressure, narrowing of the arteries (atherosclerosis), coronary artery disease and stroke. So if you are a person with diabetes, you have a higher risk of developing heart disease and stroke.
- Women with diabetes have an even greater risk for heart disease.

1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2023/02/message-from-the-minister-of-health---heart-month-february-2023.html>, Jan. 22/24

2. *Ibid.*

3. <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/heart-disease/risk-and-prevention/condition-risk-factors/diabetes>, Jan. 22/24

4. *Ibid.*



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## WONDERINGS

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Consider your local community, who might need to know God's love in your community and how can you offer it?

Consider Canada, who might need to know God's love in this country and how can you offer it?

Consider the world, who might need to know God's love and how can you offer it?

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## ACTION BRAINSTORM

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How can you/your parish reach out locally to those needing medical care or socio-economic support?

How can you/your parish reach out nationally to those needing medical care or socio-economic support?

How can you/your parish reach out globally to those needing medical care or socio-economic support?

As we reflect during the season of Lent, in what unique ways is God leading you/your community to share God's love?

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## ACTION SUGGESTIONS

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Host or support a community event focusing on heart health, healthy eating, stress reduction, physical activity, etc.

Contact the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada to learn how you can help raise money and awareness for heart health. [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)

Attend or offer a CPR course in your church hall open to the community. You can find courses being offered here: [cpr.heartandstroke.ca/s/courses](http://cpr.heartandstroke.ca/s/courses)  
Or contact your local St John's Ambulance. [www.stj.ca](http://www.stj.ca)

Host a fundraiser to support CLWR initiatives that provide Dialysis for a Child (\$500), or Mobile Clinics (\$75).

Consider hosting a physically active event (perhaps a skate-a-thon, winter hike, indoor track walk, etc.) to raise funds to support CLWR initiatives such as Hygiene Kits (\$20) or Pregnancy Care (\$60).

Engage with the children of your community, following the suggestions above and including them in the active events you plan. If your area schools support Jump Rope for Heart, discuss this connection with the children. Consider supporting them as a congregation, in their own fundraising efforts or as volunteers.

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## FOR CHILDREN

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Ask children what does it mean to love others.

Talk about how Jesus taught us to love one another.

Ask children what it feels like to be loved.

Ask children how they can show love to their parents, siblings, friends.

Talk about how you can show love to strangers in safe ways.

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PRAYER

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Loving God,

Thank you for loving us.

Thank you for giving us all the things we have  
and looking after us.

Help us to share the things you give us with others  
so that they can know your love too.

Amen.