

Life in the Word

Cornerstone Sermon-based Life Group Lesson



Sermon Series: **Hope Now and Forever**

Sermon Title: **Hope for Sexual Purity in an Immoral World**

Scripture Passage: **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8**

Getting Started Sharing from personal experience

1 Thessalonians 4 is considered the holiness chapter. In it Paul points to the very holiness of God and how the disciple of Jesus strives for that as well (“be holy as I am holy”). A good definition for Holy is “The attribute of holy is to be separate from the common and unclean, unique among all others, different from what is normal, pure as belonging to God, and devoted to the other, as the three of the trinity are devoted in love to each other. Being the holy One, God himself, his ways, and his thoughts are different from what human wisdom judges right and best.” (Dr. John McKinley). Let’s dive deeper into this theme of holiness. Think back to what we know about the culture in that time...the immorality that was going on in the temples, the forsaking of marriage vows, this was what Paul was writing against. Paul would stress that holiness is not just a physical battle, but a reflection of the Spiritual battle as well. Lets take a closer inspection of Paul’s earnest desire for the Believer to be holy.

Observation Discovering the context

1. Before we begin, let’s trace the theme of holiness (as Paul would have) through the Old Testament. What does Scripture teach us about the Holiness of God? What does it reveal about humanity?

2. Now, lets trace the theme of holiness through the New Testament. Does anything change? Whose responsibility is it to maintain holiness, ours or God’s?

3. You've heard it said, "old habits die hard". We tend to live our lives in happy complacency. While talking to a friend, prompting them to turn from temptation, you might hear, "well, I am saved, so I can live like I want and Jesus will forgive me. Why do I have to change?" How would you respond to them?

4. In 4:5 Paul says "not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God", yet in the book of Romans he states that man (both Gentile and Jew alike) are without excuse when it comes to knowing God. How do you resolve this tension? (Hint: this is not a contradiction, think back to the culture and time...in what ways were the Gentiles living immoral lives)

5. In vs. 8 Paul mentions the giving and help of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit is a person who possesses all the distinctively divine attributes. He lives eternally with the Father and the Son, the Triune God. He is the Lord and Life-giver who touches and permeates creation, reveals God to people, sanctifies believers, empowers them for mission, and enables personal discipleship." (Dr. John McKinley). In what ways does the Spirit help us to remain holy? Why is it important that Paul points out that the Spirit is sent from God, and how can we disregard him?

6. How does knowing we will one day be the spotless Bride of Christ motivate you to holiness now?

Interpretation Discovering the meaning

Read 4:3 again. We are always looking for God's will...so what is it according to Paul?

Core Truths Discovering Biblical truth

In your own words, share at least one core truth God has shown you in this week's study and why it is timely or significant for you.

Practice Makes Progress Putting knowledge into practice

What action is the Lord prompting you to take this week as a result of being in His Word?

A few thoughts: It might be helpful to have a commentary, Bible dictionary, or some other recourses with you as you go through these lessons. Also, the two definitions provided (on the Holy Spirit and on holiness) are only 50 words and would be beneficial to memorize. It is required for students who take Theology courses to memorize these at Biola.

Worth Memorizing

Scripture: For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. *1 Thessalonians 4:7*

Prayer Time

How can your Life Group pray for you this week?

Praise Time

How has God blessed you and answered prayer this week?