

Honest Walk Among Those at School

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[0 : 00] 1 Thessalonians chapter number 4, verses 9 through 12, same passage as this morning. And there's so much more left for us, and there'll be so much more left for us when I am done tonight as well.

But as touching brotherly love, you need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed, you do it toward all the brethren which are in Macedonia, in all of Macedonia.

But we beseech you, brethren, that you increase more and more. And that you study to be quiet and do your own business and to work with your own hands as we commanded you. That you may walk honestly towards them that are without, that you may have lack of nothing.

I would like to specifically help the students in the room tonight with application. The Word of God, you ask the Holy Spirit any time we come to God's Word to make application in your life. We have different lives, you're living at different places in life.

I can't make application for everybody, but I'm not given that responsibility to do so. But I want to help the students in here think through this passage as they start out the new year.

[1 : 04] Specifically in this regard of doing a work and not wasting the work that they're doing. The two pictures, that's right, as a way of review. Some of you are in children's church today. And so I just want to see, I want you to see this picture again.

The one that says, I'm just at work. And it's this black box in the middle of a calendar. And that represents, for many in here, your work week from 9 to 5. And whether it be in person or online, but there's time that is dedicated to the work that you do.

And it's a sizable portion of your calendar week. And so that's a sizable portion of your life. And that represents what most of you are doing in school.

There's three different models that kids are involved in. But all three ways in which kids are being educated in our church, it takes time. It takes commitment. It has an opportunity to test you.

Are you going to do it as unto the Lord? There's decisions that you make. And so it isn't just school, you know. It isn't just school. It isn't like God's only interested when you're involved in Sunday school or you're here at church.

[2 : 10] The same God that is present here, as you're at school, He has an opportunity to be worshipped or disobeyed. The Holy Spirit can be grieved.

And so we are saying that we're not just working. But the next slide we were saying is that not just working, but we're walking honestly towards them that are without for God's glory. Which means you're living out your Christian life in front of some people who don't know Jesus yet.

One of my favorite things that I get to do, and I'm almost sad that you don't get to do this, that Stephanie and I asked prayer time among the high school class when they are sharing how they were trying to reach their friends with the gospel is super special.

They are the friends that I wanted when I was in high school and didn't have. And I have them now, all right? And they have to be my friend because they're pastor and teacher, all right? And we bring the tacos to the afterglow, so you've got to let us come in, all right?

And the first thing I want to say here, it's a simple thought, but I don't know that I've ever heard this said before. That ought to get you concerned, all right? What a pastor says, you've probably never heard this before. You'll probably find your way to the door.

[3 : 20] But let me see it and see if you've heard this told before. But I'll get to verse 10. It says, That's the thing that I don't remember hearing anybody telling me, that where you go throughout the week, if you are mindful of the fact, you can find other Christian people.

How many of you adults in here will testify of that? It's just wonderful. It's what we pray for. When Greg goes out and he's trying to get into a new apartment complex or something, we say, Let's pray because we may run into somebody at that front desk that's like, I'm all for what you're doing.

I love Jesus as well. And so we pray for them. Some of your lives have been tremendously blessed by somebody who moved in besides you or somebody at a workplace that you realized that they were Christian.

And this verse here, it says, Indeed, that brotherly love continued to all the Christians in the community. That's a good testimony. So it gives us a couple things in this verse. One is to seek out other believers and establish your friendship around Christ.

Seek out other believers. So if you're going to seek out other believers, then you're going to have to first identify yourself as a believer. All right? I jokingly say that when I get on an airplane, when I sit down beside a person, I reach out and say, My name's Trent.

[4 : 51] We're going to be best friends. Every time I do that, I either make a best friend or I get an empty seat beside me. Either one's okay. All right? And I just identify right off the bat, all right, what's going to happen here.

I would encourage you, you find a way, maybe not in these words, but as soon as possible, you make sure the kids at your school, the kids in the community groups you're going to know that you love Jesus.

I'm not saying they just know that your family goes to church because that's what we all do here in Atlanta, even though there's no traffic on Sundays. But somehow we all go to church. But I'm saying they need to know that you personally love Jesus.

And the quicker you can get to that, the better off you are in identifying who you are. And establish your friendships around Christ. Let the fact that you call upon the name of the Lord be what you are known for.

Turn to the book of Genesis, if you will. Bo and Lauren are having a child, and they won't tell me the name. And if I would have known that, we would have discussed that before he came on staff here at the church.

[5 : 56] You've got to disclose all names. Greg's agreed. I get to name any children him and Grace will have. And we've talked about it. She did not like that. All right. All right. Because the funny thing is, she's like, they might have really agreed to this.

But there's a child that is unnamed, and I'm hoping they will tell us. But I was going to have to give the clues that my kids know, but it isn't for me to give away.

But here in this story, Cain and Abel. Cain who kills Abel. He's driven out of God, by God, into the wilderness. His descendants, they develop agriculture, music, and metal.

Separately, not metal and music, but metal, music. Great workers. And they were like they were supposed to. And they became defined by their work. In Genesis 4, 17, it says, I didn't tell you all four, did I?

Genesis 4, 17, and it says, And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived, and bare Enoch, and he builit a city. That's how he was described and how it was named. And then we get down to verse number 20.

[6 : 59] I'm going to skip some of the harder names here. And Adah and bare Jabal, who was the father of such that dwell in tents. They had cattle. The next verse talks about the father that handled the harp and the organ.

And then the next one is the instructor of artificer of brass and iron. And it describes what they do. And this all comes to Genesis chapter number 11, where there's a tower of Babel that is built.

This magnificent tower that was a great achievement. It was make their names great for themselves. But in contrast, look at verse number 26.

In contrast, the Cain's kids were this, they did that, they did this. Look how it describes the children of Seth. Verse 26. And to Seth, to him also there was born a son, and he called his name Enos.

Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord. The point is not that the worshipers of God don't work or create. The point is that worshipers of God are not defined by our work, that we call upon the name of the Lord.

[8 : 02] So when you go to school, you're not primarily a soccer player. You're not primarily a math student. You're not primarily any of those things. You need to be known as a person that calls upon the name of the Lord.

We joke, we often joke about, do you eat, do you eat your chips at the Mexican restaurant? Do you pray before the chips, mid-chip, or after the chip, you know?

We all know it's supposed to happen sometime in there. I usually pray 500 calories. That's my rule, all right? You've got to pray by the time you get to the 500-calorie mark. I had to create another division there.

But when do you pray? The Bible will tell us in everything, give thanks for this is the will of the Lord. I don't know that we have scripture that tells us that we're supposed to pray right before a meal, but we're told that we're supposed to give thanks in all that we do.

Do we have scripture that says pray before lunch and dinner? Anybody? You can tell me. I believe you will. I believe you would have told me anyway if you knew afterwards. But feel free to tell me. I think we just know that we're supposed to, and it's a wonderful time to slow down in our day and to recognize it.

[9 : 07] And as simple as it is, kids, I want to tell you, don't lose that opportunity every time before your meals. And let me encourage you, not just there, but think about other things.

If something good happens in your life, something good, the teacher says, hey, I'm going to give you an extra day on this or something, why don't you gather with your Christian friends and say, hey, let's pray and let's thank God for this opportunity.

Or something's going on in your school, gather people around and pray for them. Some of you are saying, that would be awkward and that would be weird. Well, let me encourage you, embrace the awkwardness and the weirdness.

It is a gift to your friends. And the more that you do it, you will find when a kid comes alive, I wish I could get all the teenagers and kids up here to look at all the adults in here.

But have you not seen in life when a Christian takes a stand and begins just saying they're going to serve the Lord and starts doing things like that, how many other Christians begin to step up and say, I'm so thankful that you are doing that and they're grateful for it.

[10 : 15] But for me, I prayed as my freshman year in high school and Tinsley thinks it's so funny to hear her dad crying and I'll cry and I'll say, Bob, I just want to have one Christian friend.

If I just had one Christian friend, this would be so much easier. And on my last day of school, I'm telling to my friend, he's like, what are you going to do this summer? And I told Chuck, I told younger Chuck, all right, another Chuck, all right.

And I told him and I said, Chuck, I want to be honest with you, man, I had been miserable this year at school. Like I go to church. And he's like, yeah, we all go to church. I'm like, no, man. I'm like, I'm there like eight days a week.

Like I'm just there like all the time. Like I like this old deacon picks me up on Saturday and we visit old people. And I actually think it's cool. Like you don't know what you're talking about, Chuck. Like I love the church.

I love Jesus. And I'm just so tired of not saying that. And Chuck with tears in his eyes looked at me and said, I love Jesus. I love going to church.

[11 : 14] And neither one of us knew that about the other because they were just so busy being cool, so busy hiding our true identity. And I missed out on a wonderful relationship with somebody that year because I didn't speak up sooner.

Adults, I'm trying to speak plainly for what a word to mess up, right? I'm trying to speak as simple as possible for our students here as they go back to school.

But as I say it, I know it's still true where you're at at work. Maybe some of your coworkers don't know. You're a radical, all right? You are like you're not just a Sunday occasionally going the kind of church.

And I would encourage you to make sure they know that about you. And isn't by coming up to them and just telling them, hey, I'm a better Christian than you. I haven't told you that. No, that is not what you're supposed to do.

But living out your faith, taking a prayer list, praying with them, and living out your faith among them. And so what do you look for in a friend? I could give a long list, but I'm just going to pick one, okay?

[12 : 21] Because I don't want you to forget it. Earlier in this chapter, chapters 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 through 8, will be a wonderful passage to go through. It will be a wonderful passage for families to go through with their kids during this week.

A person who isn't, look at verse number 5, okay? 1 Thessalonians 4, 5. A person who isn't striving for holiness is a person who doesn't know God.

Verse number 5, not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God. None of us are perfect.

None of us always do right. But you need to have friends that pursue holiness. Which means that when they do wrong, they're grieved about it.

That they want to do right. Because those who don't, they don't know God. I'm not telling you to ever be unfriendly to people. I'm not telling you to be unkind to people. But when we talk about friendships, we're talking about letting people into this circle into our lives.

[13 : 24] People that the Bible would speak about being a true friendship. You need to have friends that are pursuing holiness. And that means that they are grieved over their sin.

When you have a friend that professes to be Christian, but they do not have any desire for holiness, they have set themselves up in a very dangerous place in life. And one of the greatest gifts that they're ever going to have is a friend who really lives out their faith.

Because they're going to live much of their life saying they're a Christian, but not pursuing holiness. And thinking they can just say that they're a Christian, and that makes them a Christian. And they may get through high school, college, and the rest of their lives, and they may never encounter a real Christian that says, No, I want to live according to the Bible.

Adults, you know what I'm saying is true, don't you? Is that you have friends, and you need to say, I need to know more than that you attend church. I want to know, are you pursuing holiness in your life?

Do you love Jesus? And in loving Jesus, does that cause you to hate the sin and want to fight against it? A good friend is not going to be trying to pull you away from the things of God.

[14 : 35] A good friend is going to help you as you follow the Lord. So first of all, I want to encourage you, as you're walking honestly in your school year, to seek out friendships with other Christians in your community, and wherever you're at, find them, get to know them.

Number two, spend time being taught by God. Verse number nine, For ye yourselves were taught of God to love one another. In the same chapter, verses one through five, it says that there's a form of love that would promote selfishness.

The seat you, brethren, verse one, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus that you'd received us how you ought to walk, and to please God so you would abound more and more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus, and this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you would abstain from fornication, and that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification, and honor, and not in the less concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.

There's a form of love that is selfish, that is taking, that is not honoring to God, and it gets promoted as love, and we spend time with the Lord, and he teaches us how to love one another.

The God of heaven gets to define love, and we learn from him how to do that. A real love cares for other people. We need to be taught this. Romans 12.10 talks about being kindly and affectionate, one to another with brotherly love, and honor preferring one another.

[16 : 02] And in the family of God, you're not permitted to love the Father, and despise siblings. And I would encourage you, that among your siblings, is the first place that this should be lived out.

It's a big factor in your life, is your brothers and your sisters. You have the same parents, but if you're a Christian, you have the same heavenly Father.

And you ought to be asking the God of heaven to teach you how to love them, and how to care for them. And if you're demonstrating love, you want what's best for them. You don't enjoy when things go bad for them.

You really care for them. So I would encourage you today to go out of your way, to do something for another follower of Jesus that you would do for a family member.

Why don't you take a moment and pray for a fellow believer of somebody in your life, and to think about it. Some of you may already have a friend. Some of you may have a co-worker.

[16 : 59] I know it's odd in the middle of my sermon to take a moment and pray. But I want to, and I would like to encourage you to do that. I want you to think of somebody in your life that their Christian life is being a blessing to you, and I want you to pray for them.

I want to pray Lori from Mirco. All right? He helps run the seminary there in Chile, and even though we don't speak the same language, we do speak the same language. I just know where the guy's at in life in so many different ways.

I was blessed by meeting him, and I want to pray for him. And maybe I ask anybody in here, would anybody share with me who is the name of the Christian that's not in this room, that's in your life, that has been a blessing to you, that you want to take a moment and thank God for them.

Not all at once, people. All right? Anybody in here? Yes, ma'am? Your best friend, Lynn Smith. We met her at the fireworks, didn't we?

Yeah. And I won't forget, because my middle name's Lynn, and all of y'all know, have a good laugh if you need to. All right? Lynn Smith. Yeah, that's wonderful. Anybody else? Yes, sir. Daniel?

[18 : 02] Your boss? That's wonderful. Tyler? Jeffrey Swirschler. Jeffrey. Okay. All right. Thank God for him.

Who else? I want to get one more, okay? David? David Lundy. David Lundy. That's good. Thank God. I can't skip Miss Jeter. I'm afraid to. All right.

Claire at the Believer's Band. Claire at your Believer's Band. That's wonderful. People she gets to worship Jesus with. Claire. Let's just take a moment, and let's pray, and you think of somebody, and if you don't have somebody, ask God for somebody in your life.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for my brother Mirko. I thank you that I had the privilege of meeting him. I thank you for the work that he's doing, and I pray for him, Lord. He carries burdens that I probably do not even know about.

He has responsibilities, Lord, that are quite heavy, and I pray that he encourages himself daily in you. Pray that he finds the joy in serving you and all that he's doing, even though many times it's probably overlooked.

[19 : 16] I pray for his family. I pray for the church that he serves in. I pray for the seminary. I pray that today he has spent it with you and that he leaves encouraged, knowing that the work that he has been given to do this week, it matters.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. And so, I want you to see here, for yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And so, as we've spoken about having friends that care for you, I want you to focus on what it means to be taught of God.

And the world would teach you a false understanding of what love is, but only God could teach you appropriate understanding of love that cares for other people. And so, how else might you be taught of God?

And that is the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. He brings remembrance to you. You've signed up for many classes in here. Some of you that are in high school, the farther you're in high school, the more complicated.

Some of you are getting ready for college courses, and you're signing up for different classes, and I want to know, have you signed up in your life to be taught of God from His Word, and Him to teach you and instruct you, because He offers it.

[20 : 30] If you were at a school and you had the opportunity to sit at the feet and to learn from God, I would hope you would take that course. It's available. Jim Elliott, he had this saying that he wanted to have an AUG degree.

It was come from 2 Timothy 2.15, Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. That's your first priority.

Some years ago, Mark Tolson and I worked in campus ministry at the University of Cincinnati. Still not a fan of Ohio football. Dan didn't work, all right? And while we were there, something you'd hear often in campus ministry is they would tell us, we've got to be, we're students first.

And I would say, no, you're not students first. You're always a Christian first. That is always the most important thing about you. And so in all of your learning, make sure you learn the things of God.

And then the Bible would tell us that we learn from others. And besides our parents, which is primarily what is the vast majority of teaching that we see in scriptures, comes from our parents. But the Bible says in Proverbs 15.7, The lips of a wise, dispersed knowledge, the heart of the foolish doth not sow.

[21 : 37] That God would put people with wisdom in your life, in your schools, and they would be here in the church that have wisdom, and they teach you, and you ought to be looking. That is a way in which God is equipping you.

And we're told that we should be teachers ourselves. In Hebrew, there is a time when you should have been teachers you had need. You are developing, all of you in here, you are developing to be a teacher. You may not be vocationally a teacher, but teaching is the work of every Christian.

It is what all of us are being called to do. But even farther than that, some of you may experience this in college or maybe in your school, but unbelievers who are not able to teach us the most important things, we need to know about God and about His ways in the world.

Nevertheless, it's not all that the Bible has to say about education. Proverbs 6.6 tells us, that we go to the ant thou sluggard and consider her ways and be wise. Which means that you can have a teacher who's unbelieving and you can show respect to them and they can teach in their field even if they're not going to teach you about the things of God and you need to recognize what is it that you're supposed to learn from them.

If you go to an aunt, you don't talk to an aunt and say, hey aunt, tell me everything you know about God. No, the aunt has a specific job which is to teach about a work ethic. And when you have unbelieving people in your life, God can use them in your life to give you a knowledge.

[22 : 59] And some of the knowledge we have in this world overlaps that of unbelieving people. You know, math is the same for believers and unbelievers. We just pray more while we do it, right? And it's an overlap that is there which is to tell you, you have unbelieving people in your life, you pray for them, you share the gospel with them, but you respect them and you recognize that God can use them in your life to teach you this.

And then lastly here, see the blessing and dignity of work, even homework. See the blessing and dignity of work. All the students over here, you're getting left off the hook. I'm looking right over here, okay?

So many of them in a group. See the blessing and work, the blessing and the dignity of work. God works. In Genesis chapter number two, we are told that God works and he rests on the seventh day.

So work cannot be a curse because God is not cursed. God is not cursed, he is not burdened, he is not frustrated, he was not coerced into doing something that he did not wish to do, which means that cannot be work.

Then God placed Adam in a garden with an assignment to work and to keep the grounds. And the Lord took the man, Genesis 2.15, and he put him in the garden even to dress it and to keep it. Work was given to Adam as a gift.

[24 : 12] Placed in the garden to serve. And this was before the curse. It was not a punishment inflicted to Adam for a sin, but as part of God's original design that he would prepare and develop.

And he was a gardener. He wasn't a park ranger, he was a gardener, which means he took the things that God had, he cultivated, he worked on them, and God allowed him to create things.

He didn't just walk around protecting it, but he took resources and he did something with it. He developed them, the raw materials, for the glory of God. And in the same manner, contractors take raw materials, sand and cement, they use them to create something.

Artists take raw materials of color and music and they arrange them in art. Lawyers take principles of justice and law and they benefit society. And so the key is, as we do this, in a way, God himself is at work creating through us.

The whole commentary I found on Psalm 147, verse number 13 and 14. It says, For he, that's God, Psalm 147, 13 and 14, For he, God, has strengthened the bars of thy gates, he has blessed thy children within thee, he maketh peace in thy borders and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.

[25 : 22] These are the things that God does. How does God do those things? How does he strengthen the bars of the city? By city planners and architects, by politicians who pass good laws to protect the city.

How does he bless our children within our midst? Through the work of teachers and doctors. How does he make peace in our borders? By the means of good lawyers and policemen. And how does he fill us with the finest of wheat?

By the farmers and factory workers and restaurant owners. And he goes on to say, Our professions are like a mask of God that God wears in caring for this world.

Is that God is ministering to you through these other people in your life and through the work they are doing. And we should do our work as unto the Lord. And then the effects of the curse on the work.

Adam sins. And it says in Genesis 3, 7, 18, The thorns also and thistles shall bring forth and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. And in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread and thou wilt return unto the ground.

[26 : 22] For out of it wast thou taken for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return. For time's sake I'll just make one statement about that. It's not accurate to say that the work is cursed. What is accurate to say is that the emptiness and the frustration and the burdens and the painfulness of work is a result of the curse.

Not the work itself. Your back hurting the next day that's a result of the curse. Your interpersonal conflicts one to another as we fight. Those are results of the curse.

But it's not the work that we're doing. The work that we're doing is a gift given to us from the Lord. And so before the man fell we were given work and after the redemption of the world we will still continue the work.

Revelation describes heaven as a place. Revelation 14, 13 which the Bridge Builders class know all about. I've told the Bridge Builders class they've been in Revelation so long that if they're going to set a date when Jesus comes back we need to know because Wendy wants to put it in the bulletin and Bo wants to put it on a spreadsheet.

Alright? And so we need to know when you identify the day. But one of the wonderful things that we learn about heaven is that we may rest from their labors. That's Revelation 14, 13. Revelation 22, 3 also speaks about servants that will serve him.

[27 : 43] So this idea of heaven as a place where we do nothing and play a harp doesn't come from the Bible. In heaven there are no unemployed angels and there will be no unemployed saints. And our job in eternity will be to serve the Lord and we'll be in a perfect environment no longer dealing with the results of the fall thorns and thistles and interpersonal conflicts and sore backs but serving him.

And so let me encourage you young people get used to work and love it as unto the Lord. When you always think about work as something to get out of life is miserable because you just can't do it.

It just isn't possible. And you get a guy like Solomon who could have been set up in life so he didn't have to work because he had enough money and what he said was this is miserable as well.

So when you say that your joy and happiness is on the other side of work when you finish the project or you don't want to do it and you're always miserable about the chores you set yourself up in failure because you weren't designed to try to avoid getting out of work.

So work and love it and thank God for it. So before I pray and we're dismissed study it says study to be quiet as a student. This means speak at the appropriate time be restful and be content.

[28 : 59] That's what the Bible says when it talks about studying to be quiet doing going about your work in a disciplined appropriate way. and so study to do this ask God to help you be a student this year.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:12 it says that with quietness they work and they eat their own bread. Would you make a decision right now and I would ask I'm going to ask Charlotte to come to the piano and I'm going to ask you students if you would consider coming down to the altar as you start off this school year and making a decision that you want to live out this school year in a way that would honor him doing your work minding your own business minding your own affairs it's so easy especially with social media they get sucked up into all everybody else's problems and lose focus of what you are supposed to do and if you're going to be different in this world then you need to be a person who is intentional about staying focused on what God has given you to do the work that he's given to you at your hands is going to be handed to you teachers are going to hand you assignments they're going to give you a syllabus and you're either going to receive it and say this is as from the Lord and it's an opportunity to worship him or you're going to take it and you're going to neglect it and if you do that then you're going to set yourself up for a life of constantly trying to avoid the gift that God's given you he trusts us with work how incredible is that

Adam I'm going to trust you to take care of the garden I've given you all that you need but I'm going to give you this opportunity and students I hope that you'll take that so I'm going to ask you if you will I'm going to begin to pray and any students that will if you'd make your way to the altar I'd like to encourage you to make this decision adults let's all stand together and as we leave here tonight we take some time here and we pray for the beginning of this school year parents or adults any that want to join and pray for them but we're going to take a moment here and end our service making a commitment in our heart at our school year at our jobs that we are going to do it as unto the Lord I pray for you you you you you you

Heavenly Father, I pray for all of our students and the challenges that they will face in this new school year. I pray for them, Lord. I pray that they will obediently follow you.

That right now, Lord, that they would give you yes before you would even ask them. That they would already determine that they will follow you. They will overcome the peer pressure and the temptations that are there.

[32 : 28] And that they will make a decision in their hearts to be the type of students that you would have them to be. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.