

Friday: *Discernment and Action*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

<p>Reflect: Some things are just not worth listening to. Paul tells us, “test it all.” Granted, in context Paul is writing most directly about prophecies. Therefore the “abstaining” command applies to abstaining from false prophecies as well... “Abstain” carries the idea of running from, shunning, fleeing from. It is an active word of intentional evasion.</p> <p>One application is how we ought to evaluate all we hear and see in light of Scripture. We are challenged to only accept what is good. If it is something God is against, we are to be against it as well. Consequently, if He is for it...we ought to be for it too.</p> <p>Discernment is a learned discipline. Hebrews 5:14 reminds us we learn to discern between good and evil by practice. In this case, practice does make perfect (i.e., mature).</p>	<p>Respond: Read Hebrews 5:14. The next time you are watching TV or reading a magazine, ask yourself, “What are they using to sell this idea?” Is it something of which a Christian should approve?</p> <p>Talk about a recent movie your children have seen (or you have seen, if you do not have children). Evaluate its content. Determine what the underlying message was. What subtle agenda was promoted?</p> <p>Read Psalm 101. Can you make those same assertions? Why or why not?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Prairie View Christian Camp; another mission New Life supports. Pray that God helps you to be sensitive to subtle messages sent by the media. Pray for opportunities to practice making “right/wrong” decisions. Pray for Bob Griffin and Larry Hayes – elders of New Life. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

Saturday: *Big Picture*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 5:27-28 ¹ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace...⁵ ²⁷ I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. ²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

<p>Reflect: We are nearing the end of our look at 1 Thessalonians. I hope you have enjoyed looking more closely at this important letter (well, everything in the Bible is important for that matter). I trust you have seen even though it is “dated” (i.e., nearly 2,000 years old) it has principles and truth(s) which apply directly to us today (i.e., it is “timeless”).</p> <p>Have you made time to read through the entire letter in one setting over the last few months? Hopefully you have done so more than once. There is certainly value in reading large portions of Scripture at the same time. Yet it does take “discipline” in order to make time for it. The reality is...we are all busy. Another reality is... God’s word is worth our time. If reading is not your thing, try listening to the Bible on CD or cassette. In fact, even if you like to read, try listening to it...there is something “different” about hearing it (and about taking in God’s word in ways you are not accustomed to for that matter).</p> <p>Tomorrow we will take a “broad look” at 1 Thessalonians. Just as there is immense value in looking at a book section by section, there is also value in looking at a book as a whole.</p>	<p>Respond: How has this series enriched your faith?</p> <p>What questions about this letter do you still have? I do not pretend to have covered everything. Feel free to ask: brentm@nlccoe.com.</p>
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Pray: Pray for the National Missionary Convention; a mission New Life supports. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag – deacons at New Life. Pray for services tomorrow (and today) all around the world – pray God is glorified. Ask God to help you be a more thankful person. Pray our worship service tomorrow will be pleasing to God.

Commitment

November 8 – 14

It seems if you wait long enough many things come back in style. Sometimes this is driven by the media (e.g., a new round of Transformer and G.I. Joe toys due to the recent movies) and is focused on financial gain. Sometimes it is because, well, certain things become “stylish” again (think thrift store bargains and guys with “shaggy” hair).

At other times it seems to be because of a lack of knowledge concerning the truth. In the 1960’s the Jesus People (Christian hippies) wanted nothing to do with the church, but they wanted the blessing of knowing Jesus. It seems that attitude is returning.

Yet how can you have Jesus without His Church? You cannot. The Church is the “body of Christ,” so being part of it comes automatically with being a disciple. Since disciples of Jesus read their Bibles they know that Christ loves the Church (Eph. 5:22-33); therefore they long to love the church as well.

If you are following so far, loving the Church (Christ’s universal body; i.e., all Christians everywhere) means loving the church (the local, congregational expression of that body). In other words, being a disciple means loving New Life Christian Church (if this is where you serve and worship).

When you love someone, you care for them. You nurture them; you encourage them; you build them up; you correct them; you tend to them. The same is true for a local congregation. Merely attending on Sunday morning is not loving the body. Loving the body means caring enough to contribute your gifts to the body, sacrificing your time for the body, investing your energies in the body, confronting your frustrations about the body, preparing to serve in the body, etc, etc.

Perhaps some (within the universal body of Christ) think, “Well, I just don’t like the people here...” or “Bill was rude to me...” or “the pastor said something I didn’t like...” and finally “I’ll go elsewhere...” Well, as long as there are people “in Church” (which will always be the case), “she” is going to be imperfect. In fact, perhaps the closest thing to perfect is right where you are. Perhaps your own growth and contribution to that body is greatly needed. Perhaps your own growth and contribution will lead you to see your current perception of wherever you are is off and needs changing. Yet none of this will happen without “peace.”

People are becoming disciples of Jesus here at New Life. We are growing more and more into His likeness. We can rest assured that Satan will try to stop that from happening. Sadly he will do so through some of us (cf. Acts 20:28-31). On behalf of Christ and for the sake of His body, I plead with you...“Guard your hearts.” Don’t let Satan use you to hinder Jesus’ work. Instead, place your trust in God and follow His teaching.

Monday: *Respect & Peace*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 ¹² We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves

<p>Reflect: Paul tells us to respect (literally “know”) those who “labor” in our midst; those who are doing the work of sharing the gospel and shepherding others. Do you know those who “labor” among you? Paul specifically had the “elders” in mind. Yet by extension we should also respect/know those who lead a ministry, teach a class, etc.</p> <p>Along with the role of Biblical leadership comes the task of “admonishing” others. Very few people relish that role because quite often our fierce individualism contorts any confrontation into a “personal attack” on MY rights. It seems Paul is speaking directly to people who have been the recipient of some admonition. With this in mind, his command to “be at peace” is important.</p> <p>It can be hard to feel at peace with someone who has brought an issue to light you need to address. Yet the intent of any biblical confrontation should always be restoration and growth in Christlikeness. Proper admonition, even if not carried out as you would like it to be, should not be rejected. The love behind an admonishing action should be commended.</p>	<p>Respond: If you don’t know who those serving in a variety of ways at New Life are, make it a point to learn.</p> <p>Do you have any aspiration to be one who “works hard” in Christ’s body?</p> <p>Have you ever been “admonished in the Lord?” If so, thank the person who loved you enough to do it.</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for Ryan Nelson, the newest “church planter” hired by the CEA. Pray New Life will be a body of believers where this text is practiced. Pray for what impacted you the most about yesterday’s service to continually impact you this week. Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

Tuesday: *Relationships*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

<p>Reflect: “Do or do not, there is no try” (Yoda in <i>Star Wars, Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back</i>). Even those who have a task-oriented mentality and focus on getting the job done likely shy away from Yoda’s statement, “there is no try,” when it comes to interpersonal relationships. Relationships can be hard, even those (especially those?) in “the Church.”</p> <p>Quite simply, you cannot make someone else get along with you. However, Paul is being forceful. He is talking about a constant pursuit, on our part, at being intentional with treating others well (e.g., Rom12:13; 14:19; 1Cor14:1). It is easier said than done, even if it is with fellow believers. Yet it is also not optional.</p> <p>Perhaps that is a reason why Paul includes the list he does. After all, at one point or another, who has not been everything Paul mentions in verses 14 and 15? God has shown us such great patience, how can we not return it to others?</p>	<p>Respond: The “idle” person is disorderly or out of step with everyone else. Have you ever been that person in your Christian walk? (Hint: it implies those who are not consistently living the Christian life, not just those causing problems.)</p> <p>To whom, in “the church,” is it hard for you to show kindness? Pray for that situation, both for them and for yourself. Pray for what God would have you do.</p>
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Pray: Pray for God to be at work at LCS, MCC, and OCC; missions we support. Pray for New Life to be a patient, encouraging, and purposeful congregation when it comes to our interpersonal relationships. Pray for your ability to see all people as loved and valued by God. Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

Wednesday: *The Power of Perspective*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

<p>Reflect: The Ten Commandments have been abused and much maligned in both the secular culture and the Church. Too often they are erroneously viewed as something pertaining only to the Old Testament. Therefore, they are not important for “New Testament” Christians. After all, we are “under grace,” not the “law.”</p> <p>Yet here we have three commands, with five more to follow, even though we are “under grace.” Grace is amazing (and truly beyond our understanding – when you ponder it). Yet we must not forget that grace elicits a response (e.g., Exod19:1-6; Rom6). We must remember God is the giver of good gifts (cf. Jas1:17) and wants what is best for us. However, we live in a fallen world and bad things “happen.” Yet being “in Christ Jesus” should always shape our perception of what is taking place – and our response.</p> <p>So please note, Paul did not write “give thanks for everything,” but “give thanks in all circumstances” – a subtle but huge difference. When we seek to live with the eyes of faith it is amazing how the situations in which we find ourselves can bring about great growth in our lives (cf. James 1:2-4).</p>	<p>Respond: How would you rate yourself on the implementation of these 3 commands?</p> <p>When was the last time you prayed through a tough situation? Say a prayer of thanks to God for His faithfulness in it.</p> <p>How are you doing in relation to conforming to “God’s will” (4:3; 5:18) for your life?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools. Ask God for a desire to pray throughout the day. Pray about the most challenging situation you are facing at the moment; ask God to help you see it through the “eyes of faith.” Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

Thursday: *Listen & Learn*

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

<p>Reflect: Beginning in verse 12, Paul provides a list of instructions. Contained within this list are “impossible” commands to keep. We are to “listen to correction,” “warn, encourage, and help,” “be patient,” “refuse to take vengeance,” “be joyful, pray, and give thanks” – and here is the kicker – no matter our circumstances. How is that possible? It is not, outside the Spirit’s help that is.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit longs to aid us in accomplishing what God expects of us. It is His responsibility to come along side us and enable us to live faithfully. It is our responsibility to cooperate. “He” is willing to do His part. Are we willing to do ours?</p> <p>Prophecy is a word from God; a word of instruction when we need it (do not read “foretell the future”). We are never to ignore those instructions. We know we read them in Scripture; we may also hear them through a godly teacher. Whenever they occur, we are to hear them...and heed them.</p>	<p>Respond: Think about the last time God “spoke” to you in a lesson or sermon or song. Did you “listen?” Did you respond in an appropriate way?</p> <p>When was the last time you sensed you might have “quenched” the Spirit (failed to pay attention to His prompting in your life)?</p> <p>Which of the commands in this text do you need the most help from the Spirit to faithfully accomplish?</p>
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Pray: Pray for the ministry of Cookson Hills (a Christian Children’s home and mission New Life supports). Pray for an openness, as well as an ability, to “hear the Spirit.” Pray that God’s word speaks to you clearly and often. Pray for a willingness to submit to the commands of Scripture. Pray for Brent McCrory – the preaching minister at New Life. Continue to pray for open doors to share God’s Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.