

**Friday: Love**

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10a<sup>9</sup> Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,<sup>10</sup> for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia.

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| <p><b>Reflect:</b><br/>Content, but never satisfied. It's the condition of having attained at least a reasonable level of expertise without having mastered the discipline. That seems to be Paul's perspective here. "You do love; love even more."<br/><br/>Biblical love is not a mere feeling. Love is a committed concern for another's well-being, without thought for what you'll receive in return. We know we love when we demonstrate our concern in our actions. After all, Jesus said we will obey Him if we love Him (cf. Jn14:15,23) and others echoed that sentiment (e.g., Jude22-23; 1Jn3:16-18).<br/><br/>Love looks like a meal to a new mom; a bag of groceries to the Salvation Army, or someone in need; a hug to a hurting neighbor or someone in the New Life family; making the time to get to know your neighbors as people made in God's Image; tutoring at an after school program; picking up trash around town; mowing a neighbor's lawn or raking their leaves; sharing Jesus with someone...</p> | <p><b>Respond:</b><br/>Are you excited about our second worship "service" this coming Sunday?<br/><br/>When was the last time you had contact with any of the families you've helped with groceries in the past?<br/><br/>Ask God to show you the ones whom you have a hard time loving. Ponder ways to demonstrate your love for them.</p> |
| <p><b>Pray:</b> Pray for Prairie View Christian Camp; another mission New Life supports. Pray for Bob Griffin and Larry Hayes – elders of New Life. Ask God to increase your love for others, especially those different than you. Ask God for an opportunity to demonstrate His love through you. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.</p>  |   |

**Saturday: No Work, No...**

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 4:10b-12 But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more,<sup>11</sup> and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you,<sup>12</sup> so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

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| <p><b>Reflect:</b><br/>Work serves a variety of purposes, two are mentioned here: witness and supply. We demonstrate we are neither lazy nor taking advantage of others when we work. We also (typically) have resources to care for ourselves.<br/><br/>To "live quietly" means one is not intruding on the lives of others and being a burden. To "mind your own affairs" means to work so as not to be a burden on others. However, we need to remember that "God helps those who help themselves" is not in the Bible...anywhere.<br/><br/>Therefore, what are we to do with this text in light of the downturn in the American economy? Sometimes jobs are scarce. One thing is to realize it has more to do with an attitude toward work than the details of work. This can mean a person takes a job that is "beneath them" (e.g., minimum wage) and then "the church" steps in and supplies what is lacking. It may be "more blessed to give than to receive." But for some it is "more difficult to receive than to give." There is nothing wrong with receiving when caring for ourselves is beyond our reach.</p> | <p><b>Respond:</b><br/>Evaluate your work habits. Do your co-workers see Christ in the way you perform your responsibilities?<br/><br/>Have you ever been in the "receiving" position? What was that like?<br/><br/>Are you aware of any needs within New Life? What can you do about them?</p> |
| <p><b>Pray:</b> 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 our worship "service" tomorrow. Thank God for your job. Ask God to bless you with an opportunity to share your friendship with someone. Pray we will be as generous as God desires us to be. Pray our worship service tomorrow will be pleasing to God.</p>  |   |

**Knowing God's Will**  
**October 18 – October 24**

It all started in the Garden. Literally, all of it. God not only created man and woman, He established the boundaries of our relationships, gave us meaningful work to do, and established purpose in our lives. It all started in the Garden.

It all fell apart there too. Man rejected the authority and wisdom of God and "did his own thing." As a result, shame entered the world. There was no longer room for intimacy without embarrassment. Toil entered the world. Work was no longer merely pleasurable; it now included sweat and sore muscles. Relationships were fractured. It wasn't long before we experienced murder. It was downhill after the "Fall" in the Garden.

God didn't establish "rules" for His own pleasure. He is not a "cosmic killjoy." He knows what is best for us. He knows relationships are healthiest when they are shaped by biblical love. He knows work goes best when we have a larger purpose than a paycheck. He knows sex/intimacy belongs in a loving, monogamous, married relationship.

For all the talk of people wanting to know "God's will" for them, it is astounding how many ignore what the Bible clearly says "God's will" is. In our text this week Paul says it is "sanctification" – being set apart for service. This includes all forms of sexual purity; i.e., not merely intercourse only within marriage, but abstaining from pornography, lustful thoughts, etc (yet we must not ignore other instances of God's will either – e.g., Rom12:1ff; Gal5:16ff; 1Thess5:16-18; 1Pet2:15-17 – no list in the Bible is exhaustive). If a person is not obedient in what is clearly revealed...then why should God reveal how a person is to further serve Him (which is the purpose of being sanctified)?

God calls His people to love Him, which results in both trust and obedience. He calls us to love Him based on His love which was first shown to us. When we grow to understand more of God's love for us we want to respond in kind toward Him...which results in responding in kind to everyone around us.

He calls us to trust His wisdom. He really does know what's best for us. Integrity, purity, chastity, honesty...they are all worthy pursuits. He calls us to trust Him...that He knows what will make our lives fulfilled.

He also calls us to obey. Even when the commands seem somewhat arbitrary or restricting, He expects us to obey. Not to prove He's bigger and stronger, but because He's proven He's more loving and wiser. We obey because we trust.

While this is purely speculation, I imagine the inside of a cage must look a lot like a jail. I suspect within the heart of every hamster or canary is the longing for freedom. What they don't know is, there is a cat just waiting for them to get "free."

### Monday: *Should I or Shouldn't I?*

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2 Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.<sup>2</sup> For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

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| <p><b>Reflect:</b><br/>The subversive messages are all around us, “Just do what comes natural...” “Everyone else is doing it...” etc. When pondering how to live our lives (e.g., when making an ethical or moral decision) we must not forget the aspect of authority. Do we have the authority to determine what is right or wrong (subjective) or does that authority come from a source outside of us (objective)?</p> <p>The world weighs in on the subjective side. However, we know better. The dilemma in this issue is practically as old as mankind. Does God know what is best for us (don't eat of the tree of knowledge) or do we know what is best for us (it sure looks good...)?</p> <p>Human opinions are just that, opinions. One teaching (or point of view) based on an opinion is no better than another based on a different opinion. Thankfully NLCC is dedicated to keeping its teaching based on the word of God. Without an objective source of right and wrong we run amuck. God's word must be our standard, not our subjective feelings.</p> | <p><b>Respond:</b><br/>Look at some parallel passages where we are “urged” to do something (Rom12:1; Eph4:1; 1Pet2:11). What similarities do you see to our passage this week?</p> <p>Is it easier for you to follow your (subjective) feelings or the (objective) word of God? What can be done to correct or enhance this?</p> |
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**Pray:** Pray for Ryan Nelson, the newest “church planter” hired by the CEA. Pray for your ability, and desire, to submit to the Lordship of Jesus. Thank God for those who teach faithfully at New Life on Sunday mornings (with children and adults). Continue to pray for workers in God's Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

### Tuesday: *God's Will*

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5<sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;<sup>4</sup> that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,<sup>5</sup> not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;

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| <p><b>Reflect:</b><br/>Not all that long ago I became aware of a worship minister in a growing church who resigned his position. Despite being married with two children and a third on the way he decided to “pursue a relationship outside of his marriage.”</p> <p>Paul is clear that to please God sexual purity is a must. He is forceful on this matter. Yet unfortunately, many times sex may as well be a “four-letter-word” because it is rarely discussed within the church. With the high number of divorces along with the rampant pre- and extra-marital sex occurring among believers, a person could wonder if we believe anything different than the world.</p> <p>It boils down (once again) to an issue of authority. Will we let God's word govern our lives, or will we let our own “passionate lust” dictate what we do? No one is to be ogled and lusted over. All are created in God's Image; all are to be treated with dignity. “Passionate lust” does not treat another with dignity; it treats another as an object to be conquered. God will punish that.</p> | <p><b>Respond:</b><br/>If a person wants to know “God's will” for their life, yet is negligent in the area of sexual purity – what gives?</p> <p>What are specific ways in which our culture has distorted your view of sexuality?</p> <p>Read Gen38-39.</p> |
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**Pray:** Pray for God to be at work at LCS, MCC, and OCC; missions we support. Pray for the Unity and Purity of New Life. Pray for the parents of children who are, and will have to continue to, deal with the over-sexed culture in which we live. Pray for your own ability to live like someone who “knows God.” Continue to pray for God's people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

### Wednesday: *Mr. Rogers?*

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 4:5-6<sup>5</sup> not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;<sup>6</sup> that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

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| <p><b>Reflect:</b><br/>It seems a “Mr. Rogers Theology,” in relation to Jesus, has infiltrated the church of God in many parts of the world today. You know, Jesus simply “wants to be your neighbor” and “your buddy” or things like that. Yet those are not the biblical Jesus.</p> <p>Granted, Jesus is loving and compassionate (e.g., Mt9:36ff), yet He is also zealous for God (e.g., Mt21:12-13; 23). When Paul wrote “the Lord is an avenger” he had Psalm 94 in mind. There God is portrayed as a God who will pay the wicked back for what they have done. Here Paul attributes that role to Jesus. Interesting huh? In fact, in another letter Paul says all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2Cor5:10).</p> <p>Every time he uses the term “Lord,” Paul applies a Greek word used to describe YHWH (the LORD) in the Old Testament to Jesus (plus Paul is critiquing something in his culture...but that will have to wait until another week). Other instances of a “high Christology” include 1:1,10; 3:11; 5:2 (to name a few).</p> | <p><b>Respond:</b><br/>What comes to your mind when you think of Jesus? Why? Is it biblical?</p> <p>Read Romans 1:18-32 for a glimpse of what happens when people reject God.</p> <p>Here sexual ethics are talked about, but how else are those who “know God” to be different than the world?</p> |
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**Pray:** Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools. Pray for God to convict you of areas of sin in your life which need addressed so you can live a more holy life. Ask God to show you areas where you are susceptible to temptation. Pray for those who are leading Community Groups. Continue to pray for God's Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

### Thursday: *If You Put It That Way...*

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8<sup>7</sup> For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.<sup>8</sup> Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

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| <p><b>Reflect:</b><br/>We are to be holy because...God is holy (e.g., Lev11:44). God takes us as we are, but we are not to remain the same. God loves us too much to allow us to remain the same. To remain “the same” means we are stuck in our sinful ways which harm us and those around us. God wants so much more for us than the heartache brought about by rejecting Him (i.e., sin).</p> <p>However, “thanks, but no thanks,” is what our actions often tell God. But do we really understand that to which we are saying “no thanks?” My hunch is that if we really understood we would be much more concerned about sin in our lives.</p> <p>God spoke creation into existence (Gen1). Jesus was also there at creation (Jn1:1-3) and He holds the entire universe together (Col1:16-17). Darkness is a metaphor for evil in the Bible and Jesus penetrates it (Jn1:5). Without God we are completely lost and without hope. Yet many times we try to do things “our own way,” totally disregarding what His will is for us. To continually reject God will ultimately result in God withdrawing His presence. That will be hell...both figuratively and literally. No one can comprehend the total absence of God. It should bother us that some will one day experience it.</p> | <p><b>Respond:</b><br/>What would happen in your life if God removed His Holy Spirit from you?</p> <p>How would you rate yourself, on a scale of 1-10, at living a “holy life”?</p> <p>How can that improve? How can you encourage others?</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 a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit so your actions do not disregard God. 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.