

More And More

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Chapter four, verse one through eight. Won't preach on this whole passage, but we'll read it all finally. Then, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God.

Your sanctification. That you abstain from sexual immorality. That each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passionate lust like the gentiles who do not know God. That no one transgress and wrong his brother's matter. Because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

For God has not called us to impurity, but to holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not man, but God, who gives his holy spirit to you. Father, we thank you for your word. God. Thank you that by the Holy spirit.

That word speaks to our heart, God. It instructs us in a way to live. It warns us about the dangers of going off into the world. And we just pray, father, that by your spirit that you would speak to each one of us this morning out of your word. I pray that you would be glorified through it.

We acknowledge that this is your word, and we rely on that word, depend on that trust your word in a world that's gone crazy. And we have the security, the anchor of being tied to you through your words. So ask your blessing on it as we pray. We thank you

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again for Marie's surgery. That went well with the watchman.

Pray that you would continue to watch over her and protect her, give her health. I lift up Ann as fluid on the lungs and pray that you would just meet her need and keep her in good health. And, God, I know there's a lot of others, as Isaiah and the other young couples looking at the future and what they're going to do, guide and direct them and provide for them. And so, God, we're just grateful. Again, I thank you for the men's retreat and just your presence here, working in each man, the opportunity to worship you and to reconnect and charge up and get ready to go back into the world.

And I pray that for each one that came, that that would be true for them. And so, Lord, we pray. As Jesus taught us. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. You maybe see it.

You may or may not know this, but I have a brother. His name is Bill. He's four years younger than me, and I maintain contact with him. He calls me whenever he's having a physical problem and complaining about his health. Well, I got a call this week, and he'd gone in for a CAT scan for a urology issue.

But in the process of that CAT scan, the doctor said, you've got a five inch growth in your lungs. I think you better go see an oncologist. Well, obviously, that is a concern. He hopes that it's just scar tissue from shingles that he had a couple years ago, but we'll see. But his main concern is that he would not live long enough to finish his hot rods.

He's an auto upholstery and well known across the nation, but he's got some of his own cars, and he just wants to live long enough to finish those hot rods. Well, I reminded him, as I often do, I think there's something more important that you need to be worried about, okay? And that's eternity. A relationship with Jesus Christ. And he's

always polite.

Yeah, I know, I know. And then he said something that really surprised me. He said, maybe you can put in a word with your friend for me. Now I'm kind of dense, and I'm thinking, how does he know who my friends are? And which one's he talking about?

And then dawn. Oh, that friend. The one with the capital FDA. Okay. And I said, yeah, I can do that for you, but I'll be praying for your salvation more than your health.

But as I thought about that, it made me kind of glad and sad. I'm glad that he recognizes that Jesus is my friend. That's good. But I'm sad that he can't claim Jesus as his friend as his friend. So I've been thinking about that a lot this week, meditating on what does it mean to be a friend of Jesus?

We know he is our friend, but the real issue is, what kind of friend are we to him? What kind of friend are we to Jesus? I submit that friendship with Jesus and with the father is the reason, is the purpose that God created. You and I. He didn't need someone to worship him.

The angels do that constantly. He wants a relationship. He created us in his own image so we could have a relationship with him. The Westminster confession asked the question, what is the chief end of man? In other words, what's the purpose of life?

And the answer is to glorify goddness and enjoy him forever. The Phillips translation translates that enjoy him forever, as enjoy pleasing him forever. We have the privilege, the honor and the responsibility of pleasing our God. And when we do, it will be well pleasing in our life. We see that in the Father and Son, they have coexisted for all of eternity.

And we think about their love for each other. But as I thought about this friendship, I don't think there can be a greater definition of friendship than the father and the Son's relationship. They enjoy one another constantly for all of eternity. Didn't need anything else but because of their love for you and I wanted to include us in that relationship. We saw that after Jesus came into the world, several times the father said, and people

heard the voice out of the sky, this is my son in whom I am well pleased.

As humans, we understand that when our kids do something good and loving and we're pleased, and God the Father is pleased with his son. And Jesus responds to that. When he was going to the cross the night before, the night he was arrested, he told his disciples, I always do what pleases my father. I always do what pleases my father. And he shared what that meant over in John, chapter 15, if you want to turn there verse twelve through 15, and won't go through the whole passage, but he's preparing his disciples for the fact that he will die, will be buried, and will raise again.

And he shares in verse twelve through 15, he says, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has known this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. I want you to think about that for a minute. Jesus Christ loved you and I so much that he willingly gave his life to pay for our sins. And then he says, you're my friends.

If you do what I command you, no longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends. For all that I have heard from my father, I have made known to you the cross is the greatest demonstration of love and friendship that the world has ever seen, that our creator would give his life for you and I, his friends, so that we could spend eternity with us. And that's what a true friend does, doesn't it? They lay down their life for others.

They're there thick and thin. They care. They want to do whatever they can for others. And if we're not willing to do that in our relationship with Christ, if we're not willing to lay down our lives for him, can we really claim that we are his friends? He laid down his life for us because we're his friend.

Do we lay down our life for him because he's our friend? Is he really our friend? So with that in mind, I want to look at the idea of friendship from the perspective of pleasing God. When you're friends with something, you're pleased to be around them, aren't you? You like doing things for them.

You want them to be pleased. And so we're going to look at just one verse, maybe two. First Thessalonians, chapter four, verse one. And he says, finally, he's been giving instructions, he's been thanking them for their faithfulness. And he said, back in ten.

And we pray most earnestly night and day, that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith. And the truth is, I don't care how far you've gone into christian life, whether you just started out last week as a new believer or you've been walking with the Lord for 70 years, there's still more. There's still things that are lacking in our faith. We're to grow in that. So he says finally.

Then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you're doing that, you may do so more and more. There's more in a friendship. We don't rely on what happened last year or 20 years ago or 40 years ago. We want that friendship to be growing with God and also with others. Before I look at the particulars in this verse, I just want to mention the context.

In one Thessalonians. And I've shared this, each of the five chapters in first Thessalonians ends with something about the second coming of Jesus Christ. That's why he wrote that book. Jesus is coming again. And there should be a sense as we go through life and as we study the scriptures that we should be looking over our shoulder a little bit, is Jesus coming today?

Am I ready? Am I prepared for seeing him? But we don't want to forget that the reason he is coming again is he wants to be with us, and he wants us to be with him for all eternity. And so he's writing these instructions to help us prepare for that time that we'll see him face to face. You know, it's good.

Sometimes I visit with Terry on the phone, and we catch up a little bit, but there's nothing like face to face, sitting down and talking to each other, you know, catching up on what's going on in our lives, our kids lives and grandchildren's lives and things like that. And Jesus wants to be face to face with us, and we will see him face to face that day when he comes in the clouds of the sky and that trumpet blast shouts, and the

archangel of the Lord cries, and we will be with him forever. So that is the context that he is coming back. And as a result of that, there's things that we still have to do to prepare ourselves to spend eternity with him, to grow in that friendship with our Lord and savior. And so the idea of Thessalonians, he's suggesting that there's more that we can do as we prepare for that time to see Jesus.

So just a few things I want you to see in this verse. First of all, we see the goal of our friendship with Jesus. If Jesus has called you into a relationship with him, it's a personal relationship, it's not religion. He wants to have a one on one relationship with you. And one of the purposes of that, he says how you ought to walk and to please God.

And I submit again that the ultimate purpose of our life in Christ is to learn how to please him. We struggle with that because we live to please ourselves, don't we? And we have to learn, how can I please Jesus, my friend who gave his life for me? And so this verse tells us that believers can live in a way that pleases him. I don't care what your background is, and we've heard some stories of some horrible backgrounds, but thank God that's the way you were.

And today you're not, praise God. But sometimes people think, oh, I can't please God. I did this or I did that, or I wasted this much time, or blah, blah, blah. No, the truth is, every one of us can please our God with our lives, and he wants us to do that. Notice he doesn't say he's pleased if you say certain things.

He doesn't say he's pleased if you think certain thoughts. He says he's pleased how you ought to walk. And he's talking there about your actions, the way you live your life. And it's always interesting. We come to church, how you doing?

Oh, I'm doing wonderful. How are you doing? We're doing wonderful, too. They don't tell you about the argument they had on the way to church or the thing that happened yesterday and all of that. Okay?

Our life matters, and more and more, we should live a life that pleases God in our life. Now, here's where I think a lot of us go astray. Because when things are going really well, oh, God is such a wonderful friend. He is blessing me like you can't even believe.

He is such a good friend.

Oh, I love Jesus, and that's all right. But the real test of your love for Jesus is when things aren't going well, when things are tough, when people are riding over your neck, you don't know what's going to happen. That's true in friendships, isn't it? If you're a true friend, it's through thick and thin. It's not just when things are going well and you're making me feel happy, but even when things are rough in the life, and that's where the real test is.

If he's really your friend and you're his friend, over in one corinthians ten, we won't turn there. But Paul is warning us that all of the Israelites, they experienced all the blessings of God after they left Egypt and went into the desert. But he says in verse five, nevertheless, with most of them, with most of them, God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. I've been at this long enough, probably with thousands of people over the years. And sometimes, it's sad to say, with most of them, God was not pleased.

They fell into some kind of sin. They had some kind of relationship problem with someone else. I mean, you go on and on, and I just pray that God would not say that about any one of us. The true trust of friendship is, what kind of friend are you when you're going through hard times? That's when we know that he's my friend.

And, yeah, he's allowing some things to happen, and I'm not enjoying them, but I trust him because he's my friend. He gave his life for me. That's the goal, to please God. Second, we see that friendships can never be forced. You can't make someone be your friend, and you can't even convince yourself to be someone else's friend often.

And that's why Paul says, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus. He doesn't command us to please God because that has to come from the heart. That has to be a desire of the heart. God has to change the heart, where that becomes the desire of our heart. I want to please God because of my love for him.

If you do it because you have to, that's not friendship. That's slavery. It's works. And God is not pleased with it. He wants us to love him as a friend from the heart.

James four. Four warns us, you adulterous people. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity against God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. You want to be a friend of God?

Then you're going to have to choose not to be a friend of the world. Those are the only two options. And the more you say no to those worldly desires, the more you're going to want to desire friendship with God, that relationship with him. I was faced with a friendship choice many years ago. There was a man I was reaching out to, and I.

And I was kind of reaching out, like, you know, if he gets things straightened around, he'll kind of come to church and he'll be a member, and, you know, he'll be, you know, it'll be nice to have him. And I'd been down in Portland. I was coming home, and I felt like the Lord spoke to me. You know, this man may never come to Christ, he may never come to your church, but are you willing to still be a friend to him? And I said, yes, Lord.

And it's been 20 years, and he's not here this morning, but I am still his friend. I call him once a month to see how he's doing, to try to encourage him and praying that he will respond to God. And we have to come to this idea of a friendship, not from what we can get out of it, but the fact that the Lord wants us to give. My oldest son had trouble making friends when he was in school. You know what advice I give him?

You want a friend, be a friend. That usually works, doesn't it? People are craving friendship, but the problem is we're so focused on ourself and they're focused on themselves, and it doesn't make for good relationships. And we have to come to that place where we start seeing that God is giving us not just the opportunity, but the power to be good friends for others. That means I'm not going to take offense at things.

I'm not going to get discouraged. I'm not going to look at faults. I'm going to do what I can to be a good friend. Doesn't mean you're going to be best buddies and spend all your time together. But it means you care and you really want to do what's good for them.

And it comes from the heart. Proverbs 17:17 says, this is what I wanted to share the other night, Alan, but I was half asleep. Okay. A friend loves at all times. That's true of God, isn't it?

His love never takes a vacation for you and I. And the more we become like him, and really, that's when we're pleasing God, we're becoming more like Christ, aren't we? And we should be more and more loving. That's why John said, you say you love God and you hate your neighbor. You're a liar.

You can't do that. And the more we love God, the more we should love others. And that means that we love again when things are going well. But when things aren't going well, as also, we love because we choose to love. It's a choice that we make.

Third thing I want you to see is this principle of more and more. And Alan's got a whole list of things like that, more and more. And the christian life is a life of more and more. We're not to be content where we're at. I did good last year.

You know, I read my bible every day. I did this, I did that. I didn't do that. I'm good. I'm just going to sit here and wait for Jesus to come back.

And he says, no, no, more and more. We're supposed to be growing in our faith. The Thessalonians were doing good, he said, and they had. They were, but he said, that's not good enough. My kids used to hate it when they were in sports because they'd have a good game.

And they did. But guess what? Dad would see. You could have drove on that guy that time. Why'd you pass it?

You could have done this. And it's kind of like, come on, dad, can't we just take good enough for good enough? And, well, if you want to get good, you got to do more and more. You gotta be growing in the faith, and we should have that desire in our walk with Christ. A good relationship is a relationship that is growing in love and in friendship.

I think that's one of the reasons that so many husbands and wives don't make it. They made a vow to God, I'm gonna stick with this person all my life. And then they start drifting apart. They're not doing things together. They're not caring for one another.

And before you know it, they're not friends anymore. And that's tough to be spending your life with someone that's not a friend. We need to be working in the area of friendships. And that means that your wife or your husband, I believe, should be your best friend. And, yeah, you can't do everything together.

Sondra wouldn't play softball with me, but that was all right. Okay. But as we have the opportunity, we do things together. We want to spend time with each other. The other night, we finished up kind of late on Thursday, and I came home and we just sat there and we visited for about 15 minutes, just catching up on our day and enjoying the.

Each other's presence. And that's what friends do, don't they? And it's interesting. If you got a good friend, if you've been apart, say, even five years, and all of a sudden you're back together, it's like you just take up where you left off. You're friends, you love being with each other.

You like pleasing one another in the same way. We should have that attitude with our friend Jesus Christ. We should want to spend time with him. It doesn't mean we can spend all day, you know, studying our Bible or praying or meditating on things, but take an opportunity to spend time with him, share with him how your day is going. Let him speak into your heart with what he wants to do in your life.

And that builds friendship. And, you know, the christian life is a hard life, isn't it? But if Christ is your friend, that makes it easy. You want to. It's not have to, because he's your friend.

That leads to the last principle I want to look at. It's in verse two. He says, for you know, what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus and I, Paul had instructed them on how to live in order to please God. And the fact is, I don't care if it's in a. Just a personal relationship, friendship, if it's in a marriage and it's your walk with the Lord.

We need instructions. There's a lot we don't know. I look back on when I first get married, when I got married, and I just feel sorry for my wife. That poor lady had to put up with a young, immature, impetuous, careless guy, okay? And I thought I was doing great.

She didn't. You gotta learn. And we should be lifelong learners. And that's what the word of God does, is it teaches us how to develop a deeper relationship with our God and savior Jesus Christ to grow in that friendship with him. He mentions several things even in this chapter, instructed as far as sexual immorality instructed.

As far as our relationships with our brothers, over in one thessalonians. Instructions that we can please the Lord by being thankful. Those are things we learn as we grow and mature in a relationship. One of the saddest things is to see somebody that's 70 years old or older and they're still acting like that 20 year old offended by this and mad at that, and, you know, living for themselves and they haven't grown. And that's sad.

We're here to grow, and that's why. One of the reasons that me or Alan, Terry, Jeremy, we're here to give instructions on how to walk with Jesus and to please him. Some of that's negative, some of that's positive, but we need that. Every one of us needs it, and God provides it for us, and that makes life fulfilling. I am so glad that God has given me the time and he's invested the work in my life, that I'm not the same today as I used to be.

Okay? That's a gift from God. Terry talked about getting old last night, and there's some things that you start to learn if you get old, if you're growing. And we should. We should be growing.

We do that as we're in the word of God makes life fulfilling. Jesus told us he would never leave us or forsake us. That's a true friend.

When he's with us, he's working in our life, and we can thank him for that. Well, just close with a story that impacted my life early on. I'd left a successful ministry in Rosebud, Montana. God was working. It was exciting, but I decided I was going to leave.

And I went to Keller Washington on the Colville indian reservation, and I was tested beyond what I thought I could endure. I won't go into the details, but I got to the place where all I wanted to do was quit. God, I can't do this anymore. You know, you didn't gift me enough to be the pastor that I think you want me to be. And so I was praying.

No, I was whining, okay? I was whining to God, oh, God, you didn't do this. You didn't do that. How come? Why all those things?

And I felt like God interrupted me.

And I shut up for a second. And he said, can you be a friend?

And I thought in my mind, well, yeah, but what does that have to do with being a pastor? And I started whining some more and complaining some more, and I was desperately looking for an out a good way to get out that wouldn't just be quitting. And God interrupted me again. Wait a second, wait a second. Can you be a friend?

And I said, yeah, I can be a friend. And I felt that. He spoke to me. He said, that's all I'm asking of you.

May not be gifted in the ministry, may not have a vision for the church. I can go on and on with things that maybe don't have, but I guarantee you there isn't a person here that if they make up their mind to be someone's friend, that they have the ability to do it.

And that's all God's looking for. He's our friend. He gave his life for you and I. And all that means is we start to take an interest in someone else, more than an interest in ourself. And when God sees that, I believe he is pleased.

He is pleased. That sweet fellowship, like the oil flowing down over Aaron's beard, that unity in the body. And yes, we're different. And yes, we have problems. I was sharing the other day that when the church used to be this way, I had two guys in the church that didn't like each other.

And somehow they started to go out that door at the same time. And they almost got in a fistfight. And I'm thinking, I'm the pastor. What am I going to do? Which one of these guys do I tackle?

Going back to football days, you know what happened? We went on a hike across the Olympics and they both went. The one man was recovering for treatment from prostate cancer, and he really struggled. We'd gone 8 miles and he decided, I can't make it. I've got to go back.

And we didn't have a vehicle back. We got dropped off. And so he said, I've got to turn around. That guy that he almost got in a fight with, he says, I'm going to go with you. And they became great friends.

He made a decision to care for somebody that had a need, and that's something each one of us can do. And God is pleased when we do that. Let's pray.

Father, more than anything, more than anything in this world, I thank you that you are our friend, that Jesus is our friend. And yes, at times we wonder what you're doing for us, why we're going through this or that, but just help us to be convinced in our souls that no matter what happens, you love us. You're working everything out for good because we love you and we're called according to your purpose. And, lord, we all have different gifts and different backgrounds, different problems. But the fact is, every one of us can respond to your love by being your friend, first of all, and then by being a friend to someone else.

I just pray that do that work in us, that the world would see the unity in the body of Christ. Oh, how they love each other. People are attracted to that. They want to be loved. And I pray that in some way, you do that work through us.

In Christ's name, amen.