

# The Vine

## Week One:

October 19-25, 2008

Imagine you get a package in the mail. In order to use what is inside “some assembly is required.” You probably fall into one of two categories: those who read the instructions first and those who are insulted by the very idea of reading the instructions. You may even be smiling right now thinking of a time when you wished you, or someone you love, would have read the instructions earlier.

As you work through The Vine this week, pay attention to the concept of instructions. Watch for who is giving the instructions and how they are being given. Consider how you would respond if you were to receive the instructions contained in this letter. Enjoy your time in the Word.

## Day One

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12. Now quickly read and review the first three chapters in 1 Thessalonians.**

You may be asking yourself, “Why do we always go back to the beginning?” For a majority of each week, we dig-in to a small passage of scripture, yet we always need to understand how the passage fits into the whole. In order to truly understand this small section, we need to see how it aligns with the entire letter. Don’t look at the repetition as drudgery. Look at it as sharpening your understanding of the entire letter of 1 Thessalonians.

We ask these questions often and we ask them again today. Are there any major themes in the letter to which 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 contribute?

**Prayer Reflection:** Spend some time in prayer and thank God for the wonder and privilege to study God's Word. Ask Him to give you a deep thirst for the Scriptures. Ask Him to show you more of Himself as you dig-in to the Bible. Ask Him for insight and understanding as you do the good work of meditating on His Word.

## Day Two

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.**

This passage mentions instructions. What is the source of these instructions? List all the clear instructions in the passage?

What does the passage say about the ramifications of following these instructions? Who benefits from us following these commands? [See verses 1 and 12]

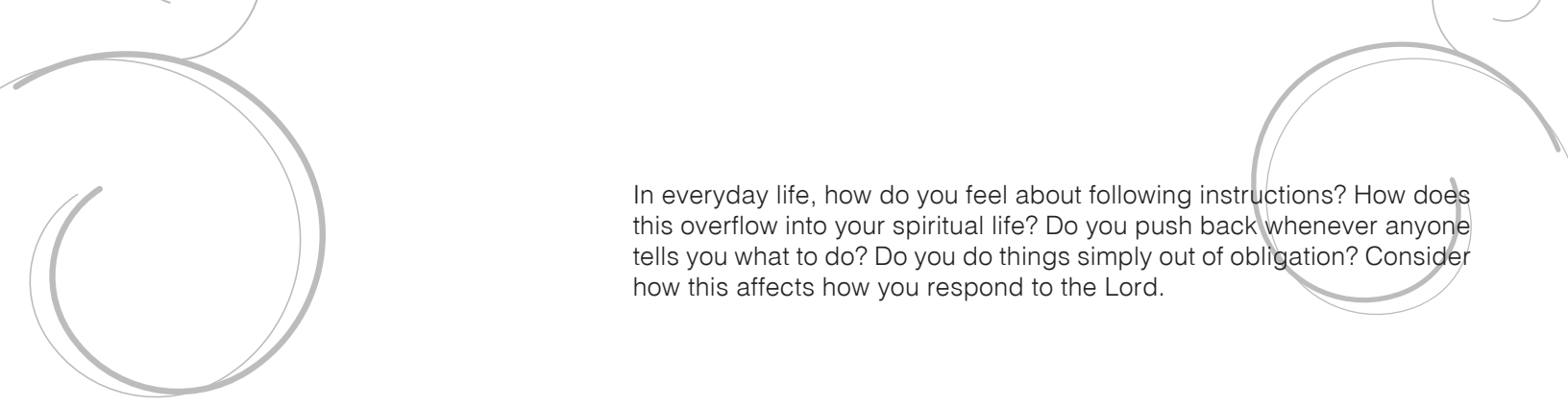
### Applying the Word

A friend who reviews *The Vine* told us, "It is so nice to have this guideline to live our lives by." But like all of us, she struggles with applying what she has learned. She goes on to say, "I think the hard part is to *live* it. It's great that Paul writes this letter and urges us to live in a way that pleases God, but how do we live that?"

Our friend continues, "Do I just pray and ask for understanding, do I have to *change* the way I live now?" The answer is a combination of those two things. We need to take what we learn and use prayer to weave it into our lives. Ask the Lord to make you different because of the time you spend in prayer and looking into scripture.

As you look into 1 Thessalonians, continue to ask the Lord to speak specifically to you and take time to listen. Many find it helpful to write down your thoughts and share it with a trusted friend.






In everyday life, how do you feel about following instructions? How does this overflow into your spiritual life? Do you push back whenever anyone tells you what to do? Do you do things simply out of obligation? Consider how this affects how you respond to the Lord.

**Prayer Reflection:** Pray and thank the Lord that He does not leave us alone, but gives us instruction and the Holy Spirit to help us in following the Lord. Ask the Lord to give you an open heart that you may hear what He is specifically asking you to do today.

## *Day Three*

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.**

In verse 3, it gives the general statement that God wants us to be sanctified. It follows with more specific commands. What are these commands? How are they all related?



A heathen is someone who does not acknowledge God. How do they act differently according to this passage?

How well are you doing with morality? How well are you controlling your body in a way that is holy and honorable?

The Lord wants us to be holy, but He does not leave us alone to struggle. Who does He give to help in verse 8?

**Prayer Reflection:** Spend some time in prayer and discuss any areas of your life where you are not living a holy and honorable life. Confess and repent. Be honest with the Lord and pour your heart out to Him. Know that He loves you. Receive His forgiveness and feel His loving presence wash over you. If it is appropriate, contact a friend to help with healthy next steps.



## Ambition

In our culture ambition is often viewed as a virtuous characteristic; we admire those who approach work zestfully and accomplish much. Another form of ambition we find detestable; that of selfish ambition. We abhor the actions of those who aggressively pursue self centered goals without consideration of the cost and damage they levy upon others.

The Greek word *eritheian* is a conjunction of sorts and means "selfish strife". It appears 5 times in the New International Version bible as "selfish ambition", each use denoting it as an unsavory practice. The Apostle Paul includes "selfish ambition" in a list of sinful characteristics (Galatians 5:20).

The Greek word *filotimoumenon* means "strive". It appears twice in the NIV as "ambition" and is used by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:11. The King James Version and the Revised Standard Version bibles translate the word as "aspire", and the New Living Translation uses "goal".

We find the word "ambition" in the bible with two meanings; one an act of unbridled self interest and the other an admirable virtue. One is sinful, the other holy.

**Study note:** You can secure the intended meaning of scripture with a little effort using biblical research tools.

*The above information was found using a concordance (NIV), Strong's Greek/Hebrew Definitions and a parallel bible.*

## Day Four

### Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

Verse 11 talks about ambition. What would your friends say about your ambition? What do you strive for?

What does the passage command us to strive for? Rewrite verse 11 in your own words with your name as the first word. (For instance, "Joe, you should strive...")

What is the result of striving for these things in verse 12? How does "mind your own business" correspond to the fact that they had great influence for Christ in the whole region?

In what specific ways can you work to earn the respect of outsiders?

**Prayer Reflection:** Spend some time in prayer and discuss with the Lord what you strive for. How does the desire of your heart match up with the desire of God's heart? Ask the Lord to show you how much He loves you. [Lots] And ask Him how you can respond and please Him more and more.

## Day Five

**Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.**

This passage says "more and more" two times. What are the two things they are doing well yet Paul still wants to see grow?

Are there areas of your life which you think you have handled pretty well? Could the Lord be asking for "more and more"?

The passage speaks of pleasing God and winning the respect of outsiders.

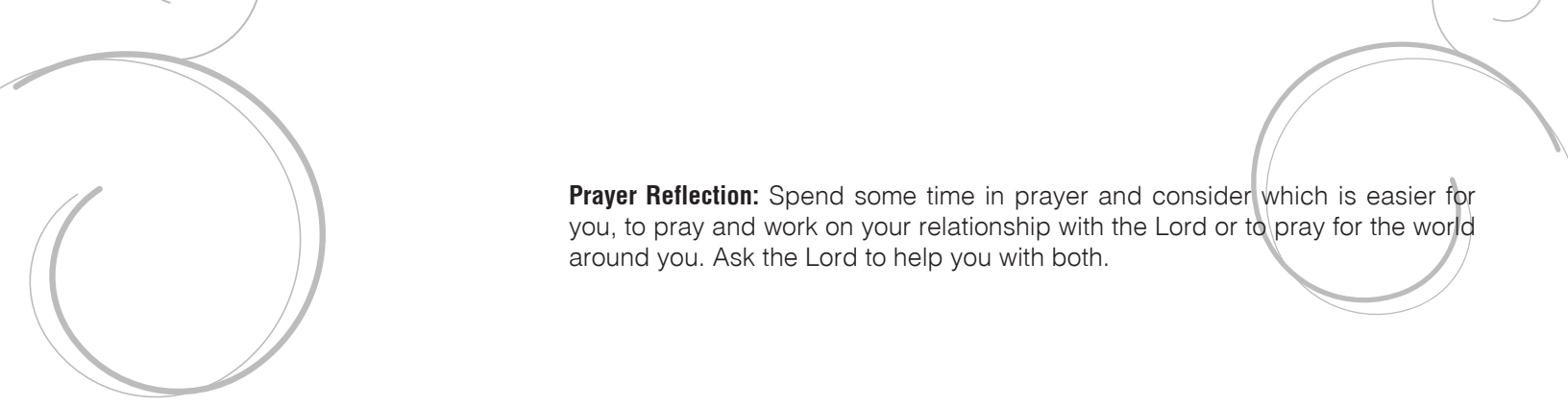
### In Jesus' Words

How does the passage below correspond to this section of 1 Thessalonians?

#### Mark 12:28-31

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."





**Prayer Reflection:** Spend some time in prayer and consider which is easier for you, to pray and work on your relationship with the Lord or to pray for the world around you. Ask the Lord to help you with both.

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