

HOW CHURCH WORKS

"HOW TO LOVE"

1 THESSALONIANS 2:9-12

This Week's Core Competency

Love – I unconditionally and sacrificially love and forgive others. 1 John 4:10-12 *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

Paul instructed believers in Rome to "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love" (Ro 12:9). The word he used for "love" belongs to a word group related to the Greek verb *phileo*. You've probably heard more about *agapao*, another Greek word for love frequently used in the New Testament. While the two words have different nuances, they are often used interchangeably, and it would be wrong to infer that *phileo* love is inferior to *agapao* love or vice versa. The primary difference seems to be that the first refers to love or affection *based on association*. As expected, it's the word used by Jesus when he said, "Anyone who loves [*philon*] his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves [*philon*] his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10:37). Lexicographers concur: "Though the meanings of these terms overlap considerably in many contexts, there are probably some significant difference in certain contexts; that is to say, [*phileo*] and [*philia*]"

"Behold how these Christians love one another."

– Tertullian

are likely to focus upon love or affection *based upon interpersonal association*, while [*agapao*] and [*agape*] focus upon love and affection *based on deep appreciation and high regard*" (Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. *agapao*, *agape*, 25.43 italics added).

Forms of both words appear in 1 Thessalonians 2:9, "Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other." The NIV distinguishes the two Greek words for love in this passage by translating *philadelphias* "brotherly love" and *agapan* simply "love," and although their use in the same context tends to blur their different nuances, Paul clearly has love between members of God's family, love between his sons and daughters, in mind.

Interestingly, Paul doesn't tell his readers to have "brotherly love." They already have it! They already have this love for other believers because they have the same Heavenly Father. However, he does tell them to love their brothers and sisters in Christ "more and more." But how? One simple, everyday way we can do what Paul recommended is by befriending other believers. We can practice the discipline of *spiritual friendship*. By the way, the link between friendship and brotherly love—if you're looking for it—isn't mathematical, it's relational. Furthermore, the meaning of friendship isn't found in a dictionary; it's found in being and in having a friend.

About spiritual friendship one author writes: "Spiritual friendship adds another dimension to the wonderful gift of friendship. As friends open their spiritual journeys to one another in the presence of Christ, they both step onto holy ground. Spirit

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connects with spirit. And the deep place where our spirit touches the Spirit of God becomes shared territory. Spiritual friends donate themselves to one another in love. They go out of their way to practice the biblical 'one anothers' together. Because of the bond of love, friends can hear truths from each other that they can't with nonfriends. Furthermore, loyal spiritual friends help one another experience their true belovedness. Spiritual friendship is not an easy path. It winds through the rigors of giving and receiving love to the very end. It lays down convenience and dies to self for the sake of the friend' (Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 152).

The "one anothers" to which the writer refers are the *one another commands* found in the New Testament: love one another (Jn 13:34, 35; Ro 13:8; 1Pe 1:22; 1Jn 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2Jn 1:5); encourage one another (1Th 4:18; 5:11; Heb 3:13); accept one another (Ro 15:7); be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph 4:32); live in harmony with one another (1Pe 3:8); forgive one another (Eph 4:32); offer hospitality to one another (1Pe 4:9); honor one another (Ro 12:10); be devoted to one another (Ro 12:10); stop passing judgment on one another (Ro 14:13); agree with one another (1Co 1:10); serve one another (Gal 5:13).

For Discussion

Every passage is about something; every passage has a *subject*. Every passage says something about its subject. Every passage has a *complement*. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12. If the *subject* of this passage is "brotherly love taught by God," identify its *complement*. What does Paul say about "brotherly love taught by God"? Or . . .

Rita is connected to community. She studies the Bible with others in Community Group and lives the Christian life together with them in Home Group. She has close friends in community that she loves as much as any member of her own family and enjoys being with even more. She wants to expand the boundaries of her "sisterly love" but doesn't know where to start. What would you suggest?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

9 Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.

11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody. (NIV(c)1984)

Cf. another translation

9 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, 10 for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, 11 and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 12 so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one. (ESV)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Bracket "now about" in v. 9.
- * Circle "brotherly love" in v. 9.
- * Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 9.
- * Bracket "taught by God" in v. 9.
- * Box "yet" indicating *contrast* in v. 10.
- * Underline "to do so" in v. 10, "to lead," "to mind," and "to work" in v. 11.
- * Box "just as" indicating *comparison* in v. 11.
- * Box "so that" (2x) indicating *result* in v. 12.
- * Circle "outsiders" in v. 12.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Paul didn't need to write to the Thessalonians about "brotherly love." Why not, and what about us?
2. Explain how "taught by God" works.
3. What do you infer from verse 10a?
4. Explain the *contrast* in verse 10.
5. List the three infinitives ("to . . .") mentioned in verse 11.
6. What possible relationship could the *first* one have to do with brotherly love?
7. What possible relationship could the *second* one have to do with brotherly love?
8. What possible relationship could the *third* one have to do with brotherly love?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the results Paul wants to see in the lives of his readers and why they're important.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The NIV divides 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 into two paragraphs. It ends verse 10 with a period and begins not only a new sentence but also a new paragraph in verse 11. The translators no doubt did this for thematic rather than grammatical reasons; the only other translation that starts a new paragraph at verse 11 is the NLT. While their decision makes sense—after all, what's the connection between *brotherly love* and *leading a quiet life*?—it isn't warranted. The period doesn't belong grammatically since the sentence continues through verse 12, and a closer look reveals the unity of the two paragraphs. Commenting on the unity of the passage, one author writes: "The relation between 'love for the brethren' in general and the specific instructions contained in this verse [v. 11] is not immediately clear. Paul seems to be more concerned in this verse with the 'image' of the Christian community in the outside world than with relationships between individuals within the Christian community. However, in the situation in Thessalonica, the church's external image and its internal relationships must have been closely linked. The church was under pressure from outside, and so any foolish or immature behavior by individuals within the church would have two effects: it would strain relationships with other, more balanced, members, and it would damage the witness of the Christian community to the outside world. It is therefore important in translation to avoid at this point any transitional expression which would suggest that Paul is introducing a fresh subject" (Paul Ellingworth and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians*, 88).

A close examination of the passage reveals that the Greek text contains one command, "we urge," an object, "you," followed by four infinitives, phrases that begin with "to" (vv. 10b, 11; cf., ESV), and a final clause that describes an intended two-fold outcome (v. 12). But before urging them to love each other more, Paul first explains that he has no need to write to them about "brotherly love" in general (vv. 9-10a). They know already all they need to know for God has already taught them to love each other. Love for others in God's family is learned from the Spirit; better yet, it is imparted by him (Gal 5:22). And this love knows no boundaries. It transcends age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, economic status, social rank, and geographical distance, and freely crosses international borders. It overcomes all obstacles.

There's no explanation for it apart from him. Paul then explains that he is well aware that they do love their Christian brothers and sisters—not only in Thessalonica, but also throughout Macedonia. Nevertheless, he says they must "do so more and more." While "brotherly love" resides in the hearts of believers and while it's safe to say that believers do love their kith and kin in God's family, every believer can and must love *more* (v. 10b).

How believers can love *more* is the subject of verses 11 and 12. Paul describes *three* ways that lead to *two* results. First, he says "lead a quiet life" (v. 11). Make every effort to live a life free from turmoil and commotion. Some Christians are easily upset, and once upset, they upset everyone around them. The turmoil of these "chicken littles" is infectious. Second, he says, "mind your own business" (v. 11). Some Christians are "busybodies." They have too much time on their hands. Apparently some in Thessalonica were idle; they refused to work. Perhaps they thought the Lord was going to return soon so why bother? In his second letter, Paul admonished their kind: "We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat" (3:11). One writer hits the nail on the head when he says, "There is a great difference between the Christian duty of putting the interests of others before one's own (Phil 2:4) and the busybody's compulsive itch to put other people right" (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, 1 & 2 *Thessalonians*, 92). Third, he says, "work with your hands" (v. 11). Some Christians avoid hard work. They would rather not work than work at something they would rather not do. Paul wanted his readers to follow the example of the apostles who worked so they would not be a burden to anyone. "We were not idle when we were with you," he reminds them, "nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you" (2Th 3:7). Following the apostle's advice has a two-fold result. First, it will win the respect of unbelievers and thereby the furtherance of the gospel, and second, it will prevent them from being a burden to others. *The Message* summarizes verses 11 and 12 this way: "Stay calm; mind your own business; do your own job."

The Message of the Passage

Love your Christian brothers and sisters more: don't disturb their tranquility, meddle in their affairs, or presume on their generosity, and you will be respected by unbelievers and not be a burden to other believers.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“How to Love”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 9 **now about** Gk. *peri de*. Paul uses this expression to introduce his answers to written questions from the Corinthians (cf., 1Co 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12). "But here Paul responds to different elements of Timothy's oral report about Thessalonica (1Thess 3:6)" (Robert L. Thomas, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:273).
- v. 9 **brotherly love** Cf., "love for your fellow believers" (TEV). Gk. *philadelphias* (vb. *phileo*). The verb means to have love or affection for someone or something based on association. In the NT the related nouns [*philadelphia*] and [*philadelphos*] "have acquired highly specialized meanings which restrict the range of reference to fellow believers. In nonbiblical contexts these terms would refer to affection or love for persons belonging to a so-called 'in group,' but in the NT this in-group is defined in terms of Christian faith" (Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. *philadelphia*, 25.34). "For the first Christians it meant, not figurative brother-like love, but the love of those who had become, in a very real sense, members of the Christian family."
- v. 9 **taught by God** "Taught by God" (*theodidaktoi*), a rare term, does not refer to any single teaching such as an OT passage (Lev 19:18), the teaching of Jesus (John 13:34), or a prophetic revelation to the church through Paul or anyone else. It rather describes a divine relationship through the indwelling Holy Spirit (4:8; cf. John 6:45). At conversion, believers become lifelong pupils as the Spirit bears inner witness to the love within the Christian family (cf. Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22). No external stimulus is necessary. Mutual love among Christians is an inbred quality" (Thomas, 273).
- v. 9 **to love** Gk. *agapao*. A different word from that used earlier, but the meaning of the two in this context is practically the same (Ellingworth and Nida, 87). "If loving one another is not understood as what God taught, but rather as the *purpose* of what he taught, then one may translate 'God himself has taught you so that you should love one another.' If the meaning is taken as *result*, one may translate 'God has taught you, and therefore you love one another'" (87, italics added).
- v. 10 **you do love** Lit., "you do this." Cf., "And you, in fact, have behaved like this" (TEV).
- v. 10 **Macedonia** "Any contacts they had with churches in Berea and Philippi are unknown except for the implications of these verses. Very possibly, groups of believers had sprung up in other parts of the province since the beginning of Paul's Macedonian mission (Acts 16:9-12). With some allowance for Paul's hyperbolic 'all,' it is safe to assume that a goodly proportion of the believers in the province had been touched by the Thessalonians' unselfish concern. Otherwise, the missionary zeal reflected in 1:8 lacks clear substantiation" (Thomas 273).
- v. 10 **yet** Gk. *de*. "The contrast is of limited scope, between the love the Thessalonians are showing and the still greater love Paul recommends, and it should not be overemphasized in translation, as JB's 'however' tends to do" (Ellingworth and Nida, 88).
- v. 11 **quiet** Cf., 2Th 3:12. "The verb 'to be quiet' is used of silence after speech (Luke 14:4), cessation of argument (Acts 21:14), rest from labor (Luke 23:56). It denotes tranquility of life" (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 133). "The word translated quiet (*hesychazein*) means quiet in the sense of restfulness (cf. Acts 22:2; 2 Thes. 3:12; 1 Tim 2:2, 11), rather than quiet as opposed to talkativeness (*sigao*; cf. Acts 21:40; 1 Cor 14:34). The former means 'undisturbed, settled, not noisy,' while the latter means 'silent.' Paul was telling the Thessalonians to be less frantic not less exuberant" (Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 703). Perhaps their unsettledness was due to confusion regarding the return of the Lord and its consequences.
- v. 12 **outsiders** I.e., those outside the Christian family. Cf., "those who are not believers" (TEV).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

I realize I am dating myself when I admit that I had just graduated from college when DC Talk released the album Free at Last in 1992. One song in particular stood out to me as a young adult ready to take on the world. The song "Luv is a Verb" challenged me to not think of love as a feeling or sentiment but as an action and a way of life. The last verse in this catchy song recalls Jesus' greatest ACT of love for us when He "gave up his life so that we may live." Today we are discovering how we, as believers, should love one another. The additional passage in Acts, that kids will be learning this week, gives a beautiful picture of the church loving each other. In fact, we have challenged kids to memorize the whole Acts 2:42-47 passage during our series. It is a rich text that describes a healthy God-honoring community. There are many principles in it but I want to challenge your family to choose one of the following and make it a verb this week! (1) Devote yourself to teaching and prayer this week as a family (v. 42), (2) Give to someone in need this week (v. 45), (3) Go to home group this week (v. 46) or (4) Share your God story with someone who needs to hear it! (v. 47) I'm praying for you this week as you make LUV A VERB!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: 1Th 4: 9-12, Ac 2: 42-47

1. In 1 Thessalonians 4:10, what does Paul urge the believers to do?
2. Read Acts 2:42-46 and list some things the believers did.
3. What was the result in Acts 2:47?

What Do You Think

1. Paul says in 1 Th. 4:12 that are daily lives should win the respect of outsiders (or unbelievers). What are some ways you can do that?
2. Think about the church in Acts, what are some things that our church does that are similar to what they did?

What R U Going To Do

If your family had an opportunity this week to show love to someone, we want to know about it! Write about your experience on the back of the portion you turn in for tokens. Also, we are halfway through our series so keep memorizing the Acts 2:42-47 passage!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Love - Giving away lots of love and forgiveness even when others don't deserve it

Memory Verse

Acts 2:47 "praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC _____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.