



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V25 N13

March 26, 2023

NOT HOME YET

“Brotherly Love”

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Love

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

1 John 4:10-12



What should believers do more and more?

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 is about *love*, the love that the Thessalonian believers have for one another and for God's family throughout Macedonia. Interestingly, two transliterated Greek terms, familiar to most Christians, appear in verse 9. The first to appear in the verse is *philadelphia* the second is *agapē*. “Now about your love (*philadelphias*) for one another, we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love (*agapan*) each other.”

Of course, contemporary readers immediately think of Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, upon hearing the first term (cf. Rev 1:11; 3:7), which appears in only one other place in Paul's writings. To the Romans, he writes: “Be devoted to one another in love (*philadelphia*). Honor one another above yourselves” (12:10). On the meaning of the word, one commentator, who prefers to translate the term “family love,” writes: “We have converted the traditional ‘brotherly love’ to ‘family love,’ to make it clear that this is love between siblings, regardless of gender. The term deserves close attention, since ‘in profane Greek and the LXX [family love] *philadelphia* is confined to the love of those who are brothers by common [i.e., biological] descent’” (Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, vol. 13, ZECNT, 167). This word, used throughout the Greco-Roman world for love between *actual* siblings, is adopted by the New Testament to connote the familial love that God's newly formed people have for each other because of their common relationship to God through Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 4:9 and in its other occurrences in the New Testament (Heb 13:1; 1Pe 1:22; 2Pe 1:7 [2x]), it always refers to love between members of the community of faith, because they have a common Abba in heaven.

Of the two words, *philadelphia* and *agape*, the second appears far and away more often in the New Testament than the first. *Agapē* is selfless love that sacrifices for the good of others. Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example love that sacrifices for the sake of others, even for those who may care nothing at all for the one who loves. *Agapē* as modeled by Christ is not based on a feeling; rather, it is a determined act of the will, a joyful resolve to put the welfare of others above the welfare of oneself. It's the love described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 where he writes: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (vv. 4-7). It's the love Jesus commanded his disciples to have for one another, in the “new command” he gave them on the night he was betrayed. “A new command I give you” he told them, “love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (Jn 13:34). Two small words stand out in his command; they are “as” indicating *comparison* and “must” indicating *necessity*. *Agapē* is the way he loved, and it's the way his disciples of necessity love.

Although it's listed among the fruit of the Spirit, one might easily argue that *agapē* is the root fruit from which the others shoot by the power of the Holy Spirit. To the Galatians Paul writes: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Gal 5:22-23). Love (*agapē*), the first fruit mentioned is the one fruit behind them all.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

9 Now about your love for one another 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 of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more . . .

Read in 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 . . . (ESV)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "Now about" in v. 9.
- Circle "love" in vv. 9-10.
- Circle "you" in vv. 9-10.
- Bracket "taught by God" in v. 9.
- Circle "throughout Macedonia" in v. 9.
- Box "Yet" indicating *contrast* in v. 10.
- Underline "more and more" in v. 10.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. “Now about” (cf. “now concerning,” ESV) suggests that Paul is replying to questions from the Thessalonians. How could he have received them?
2. The Greek word translated “love for one another” (cf. “brotherly love,” ESV) isn’t the well-known *agape*. *What* is it and to *what* does it refer?
3. Explain why Paul is so *generous* with his compliments in this passage.
4. The Thessalonians have been taught by God to love each other. How so?
5. As a Christian, when did you first have love for other believers? *Before* or *after* being instructed to do so? Explain.
6. Explain the *contrast* introduced by “yet” (v. 10).
7. Explain *what* the Thessalonians were doing that they needed to do “more and more.”
8. The words “more and more” are found in 4:1 also. Explain the link between verse 10 and verse 1.
9. In the NIV©1984 verse 11 begins a new paragraph. Why did the NIV©2011 remove the paragraph break?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about how Christians’ love for one another is typically expressed. Talk about how you express your love for other believers.

Commentary On The Text

Paul continues to write about sanctification, the will of God for all believers. Just as avoiding sexual immorality is essential to living a holy life (4:3-8), so is loving other members of God's family (vv. 9-10). One commentator writes: "Whereas the previous exhortation to avoid sexual immorality is a negative prohibition, this one is a positive encouragement. The Thessalonians needed a strong reminder from Paul concerning their sexual behavior (v. 6). But God Himself had taught them by His Spirit to love one another (cf. Gal. 5:22)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 1 Thessalonians," 2023 ed., 46, planbiblechurch.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1thessalonians.pdf).

The meaning of 4:9-10 is easily recognized from a straightforward reading of the text. Unlike in verses 4-6, there are no thorny interpretive problems in either of these verses. However, the unity of verses 9-12 has been the subject of some debate, the outcome of which affects one's recognition of a problem possibly behind Paul's words. The NIV©1984 divides verses 9-12 into two paragraphs. The first containing verses 9-10, the second verses 11-13, which according to the punctuation in the later edition, inserts a paragraph break in the middle of a sentence (cf. NLT, NCV, NCB, MSG). In fact, the sentence which begins in 10b, "Yet we urge you," continues to the end of verse 12. The Greek text has only one command, "we urge," an object, "you," followed by four infinitives (vv. 10b, 11), and a final clause that gives the intended result (v. 12). The grammar of the Greek sentence is better reflected in the following translation: "But *we urge* (command) *you* (object), brothers and sisters, *to abound* (infinitive #1) in this more and more; *make it your ambition to lead a quiet life* (infinitive #2) and *to mind your own business* (infinitive #3) and *to work with your hands* (infinitive #4), just as we instructed you, *so that* (result) *you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.*"

While the *grammatical* connection between verse 10b and verses 11-12 is obvious, the *logical* connection is not. So what *is* the relationship of love to leading a quiet life, minding one's own business, and working with one's hands? Answering that question will be the focus of the next issue on 4:11-12. Suffice it to say for now that *sanctification* (v. 3) precludes both *sexual* exploitation (vv. 3-8) and *financial* exploitation (vv. 9-12) of one's

brothers and sisters in God's family.

Paul introduces his next topic related to *sanctification* with the words, "Now concerning brotherly love" (ESV). Perhaps he is addressing a concern expressed by Timothy in his report (cf. 3:6) or a concern expressed in a letter from the Thessalonians sent to Paul via Timothy. Either one might explain why Paul says on the one hand, that he has no need to write to them about fraternal love, and yet on the other hand, he does. If they have actually been taught by God to love one another – thus it comes to them intuitively or naturally – and if they do actually love one another and "all of God's family throughout Macedonia" (v. 10a), what's Paul's point? Surely it's something beyond the simple encouragement "to do so more and more." Furthermore, why would Timothy raise the matter of fraternal love or why would the Thessalonians raise questions concerning it if it wasn't somehow, some way an issue in the church? One commentator writes: "Although there was clear evidence of love among them, however, apparently certain tensions existed within the Christian community . . . While there is no evidence of grave division among the members of this church, as is the case with the Corinthians, it appears that the Thessalonians were properly aware of their own failing in the area of fraternal love" (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 202-3).

That failing may be hinted at in verses 11-12, which suggest that some in the church were not working, choosing instead to live off the charity of others. Paul's admonition "do this more and more" would, of course, be applicable to the whole community, but it would be particularly applicable to a specific group within the community that was not doing so at all. "Indeed, they are doing the exact opposite, and in so doing they are taking advantage of the love of the rest" (Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 161). Paul's words "do so more and more" suggest that fraternal love precludes using that love to economically exploit others in the community.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 9 *Now about*

Some commentators believe Paul is answering questions generated by Timothy's report, while others believe Timothy returned with a letter from the church containing questions. "'Now about' (*peri de*) is a frequent Pauline formula for introducing a new subject (4:13; 5:1; cf. 1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12). In Corinthians the formula indicates answers to written question, but here Paul responds to different elements of Timothy's oral report about Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:6)" (Robert L. Thomas, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, 273). "Most likely, in 1 Thessalonians Paul responds similarly to queries sent to him by the church. When we consider how valuable messengers were during this era, we can understand that the Thessalonians would have wanted to take advantage of the forthcoming trip of Timothy back to Paul and Silas by sending a letter with him . . . The issues that concerned the Thessalonians and that called for clarification were *fraternal love* (4.9-10), the *destiny of the dead in the Lord* (4.13-18), and the *time of the day of the Lord* (5.1-11)" (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 202, italics added; see also F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 89).

v. 9 *love*

Gk. *philadelphia* not *agapē*. "'Brotherly love' (*philadelphia*), an expression for attachment to one's blood relatives in secular speech, was taken over by Christianity because of the close ties within the spiritual family of God" (Thomas, 273). "The church assumed the function of a family, while the place of meeting, the house, served to reinforce the reality of Christians becoming members of the same brotherhood and sisterhood (Rom. 16.5; 1 Cor. 16.9; Col. 4.15; Phlm. 2). Moreover, within the Christian community itself the question of fraternal love was of paramount importance since the church was open to people of all social classes and any ethnic background . . . Men and women had equal status, as did citizens and foreigners in this community where common social boundaries were crossed as a fruit of their common salvation (Gal. 3.23; Rom. 1.16-17; Col. 3.11). In such a community, it would not be surprising for questions to surface about the meaning of 'fraternal love'" (Green, 203).

v. 9, 10 *you*

There can be little question that the whole church is presently in view. Both explanatory clauses that follow are addressed to 'you' (plural); both of them are expressed as such commonplace realities that Paul feels compelled to remind that that he really does 'not need to write to you' on this matter" (Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 159). However, Fee goes on to argue that in verse 10b, following the address, "brothers

and sisters," he singles out the disruptive-idle (cf. "mind your own business and work with your hands") as the main target for his teaching.

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 life-long 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, italics added). Or "This message would have been a piece of the apostolic instruction that this church received and that had a divine source (4.1-2; cf. 2.13)" (Green, 205).

v. 9 *love one another*

Gk. *agapē* (to *agapan allēlous*) not *philadelphia*. "'Love for one another' in the Christian context is synonymous with 'family love' (*philadelphia*)" (Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, vol. 13, ZECNT, 169).

v. 9 *throughout Macedonia*

"Possibly the thought is that the Thessalonians showed hospitality to believers from other parts of Macedonia who traveled through the city (Rom. 16.1-2), or perhaps they gave economic support to the Christian mission (Phil. 4.14-16). On the other hand, they may have offered financial aid to those Christians who were in need (2 Cor. 8.1-5), or perhaps the manner they expressed this love was a combination of these three . . . Most likely, Paul is reflecting on the way the Thessalonian church lent economic aid to needy believers in other parts of the province" (Green, 206).

v. 10 *more and more*

Cf. 4:1. "'More love' is always a potentiality for Christians because the ultimate, the example of Christ himself (John 13:34; 15:12), is infinite and can only be approached, not fully reached" (Thomas, 273). "Paul's words were essentially encouragements to maintain and to extend the loving behavior that they had learned and had manifested already. The Greek text has only one command, 'we urge, an object, 'you,' followed by four infinitives (vv. 10b, 11), and a final clause that gives the intended outcome (v. 12). Paul's readers were already demonstrating brotherly love by reaching out to other needy Christians who lived in their province of Macedonia" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 1 Thessalonians," 2023 ed., 46, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1thessalonians.pdf).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Extend your unlimited God-given capacity to love others in God's family
to even more members of the Christian community.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

In some ways the English language is ridiculously confusing (they're, there, their?!) but in others, it's overly simplistic. Consider "love." Why do we use the same word to describe our feelings about pizza, Taylor Swift, our spouse and the Lord? There's got to be more. There are several words used to communicate different expressions of love in both Hebrew and Greek. Our passage this week is focused on brotherly love between believers. The Thessalonians had a reputation for deeply loving and caring for one another as well as other churches in the region. This makes me think of the many community groups at CBC. I hear story after story of how families in community link arms in times of financial strife, health issues, job concerns and challenging family situations. When my husband and I were first married, our Community Group completely set up our home while we were away on our honeymoon. To this day, we are surrounded by a group of friends that walk with us through thick and thin. When our bonus child first came to live with us, they went over and above providing resources and physically standing by us as he walked through the hardest time of his life. They constantly sent messages encouraging us with Scripture or prayer. I can't imagine walking through that tumultuous time without the firm foundation of our community. My kids got a front row seat of how God works through His Church. Are you experiencing the love of community? Maybe this week you'll take the first step by attending a Home Group. Not sure where to go? Email connect@wearecentral.org.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 and Acts 4:34-48.

1. Who taught the Thessalonian church how to love one another?
2. What did Paul urge them to do?
3. How did Barnabas show brotherly love (Acts 4:34-48)?

What Do You Think?

Considering God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, how does God teach the Church to love one another?

What Do You Do?

This week pick a family in your community to pray for, play with, prop up with encouragement or provide with a necessary resource. In what tangible ways will your family express love to this family?

CORE COMPETENCY: Love

I love and forgive others no matter what.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Peter 1:15

"But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

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.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

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.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

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.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

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.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with 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.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

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.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

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.

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.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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