

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 18

1	PRAYER
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Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Dedicate this lesson about disciple making to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] ACTS 11:19 – 14:28
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Take turns and *share* (or *read* from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (Acts 11:19 – 14:28).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

3	MEMORISATION (20 minutes) [NEW LIFE IN CHRIST] (3) JOHN 15:7
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A. MEDITATION

(3)

Write the following memorisation verse on a white or blackboard as follows:

Prayer John 15:7
If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you John 15:7

John 15:7

1. Assurance of answered prayer has two conditions.

Jesus uses the word “if” and teaches that he will only answer prayers if the two conditions are met.

(1) You must remain in Jesus Christ.

The first condition to be sure that Jesus Christ will answer your prayers is the indispensable necessity that you remain in Jesus Christ and in his love (John 15:5,9).

Christ in Christians! Christ lives in you through the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body” (1 Corinthians 5:19-20).

Christians should remain in Christ and in his love. The relationship between Christ and you has responsibilities on both sides. On the one hand, if CHRIST is not in you, you cannot be a believer at all! The Bible says that if you do not have Christ in your heart, you do not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9-10; 1 Corinthians 13:5). On the other hand, if YOU do not remain in Christ, you show that you never really belonged to Christ. It is your responsibility to remain in Christ.

What does it mean to remain in Christ? “To remain in Christ,” means to commit yourself to have a continuous personal relationship with Christ. It means to exert yourself to continue with Christ. It means to devote yourself to Christ and his purposes for your life. The word “remain” is written in *the present continuous tense*, which means that this relationship should continue day after day. Without this exertion or continued effort, there will be no salvation, no growth and no fruit bearing!

(2) The Word of Christ must remain in you.

The second condition to be sure that Jesus Christ will answer your prayers is the indispensable necessity that the Word of Christ remains in you (John 15:7).

Christians should remain in Christ’s Word. In John 8:31-32, Jesus says, “If you remain in my Word (hold to my teaching), you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Here your responsibility is to remain in Christ’s words, for example by the following seven disciplines.

- (1) You should *hear* the words of Christ wherever it is preached or taught.
- (2) You should *read* the words of Christ in the Bible every day.
- (3) You should *study* the words of Christ in a small Bible study group every week.
- (4) You should *memorise* the important words of Christ regularly.

- (5) You should *meditate* the words of Christ, that is, think about their meaning for your personal life and pray how God would have you apply it to your personal life.
- (6) You should *apply* the words of Christ to your own life (cf. Matthew 7:24; John 15:10).
- (7) And you should *pass the words of Christ on* to other people by preaching and teaching.

Christians should let Christ's word remain in them. In John 15:7 your responsibility is different than your responsibility in John 8:32. Here your responsibility is to allow the words of Jesus Christ to influence you and change you! By hearing, reading, studying, memorising, meditating, practising and passing on the words of Christ, the words of Christ come into your mind, heart and life. Thereafter, you must allow the words of Christ, that are in your mind, heart and life, to become the dynamic or energising force in you, which takes complete control over you. The words of Christ in you should control your thoughts and convictions, your motives and desires, your attitudes and feelings, and your words and deeds. Jesus warned, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practise is like a foolish man who built his house on sand" (Matthew 7:26). If you only gather knowledge of Christ's words, but do not put them into practise in your mind, heart and behaviour, then your life will be blown over and crash into pieces. You must allow the words of Jesus Christ to become the greatest influence in your life. The words of Christ must be the dominant influence that determines the convictions and beliefs you have. It must be the dominant influence that determines the motives and attitudes you express. It must be the dominant reason that determines what you talk about and what you give your life to. Then only the words of Christ remain in you!

2. May a Christian ask in prayer for whatever he wishes?

Yes, but if you are a true Christian, you will not wish or ask for things that do not please God! If you remain in Christ and let Christ's words remain in you, you will only ask for things that are in accordance with Christ's will. You will not ask for things that are against Christ's character or against Christ's revealed will in the Bible. Jesus confidently asked for things in prayer, but added "Your will be done" (Luke 22:42). Whenever you ask God that his will be done, then God will always answer your prayer and then God will always do his will! And whenever you ask for things that are according to God's will, you will pray with great confidence (1 John 5:14). For example, if you would ask God for things that would gratify your greed or make you successful in selfish power and worldly fame, then God will not answer your prayers. But if you exert yourself to continually remain in Christ and commit yourself to be controlled by Christ's words, you may pray with great confidence. Your prayers will be heard and will be effective and powerful! "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). "God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20)!

B. MEMORISATION AND REVIEW

- 1. Write.** Write the Bible verse on a blank card or on one page of your small notebook.
- 2. Memorise.** Memorise the Bible verse in the right way. (3) Prayer. John 15:7.
- 3. Review.** Divide into twos and check one another's last memorised Bible verse.

4	BIBLE STUDY (70 minutes) [RELATIONSHIPS] (3) THE CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP TO THE OPPOSITE SEX: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8
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Make use of the five steps method of Bible study and study 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 together.

<u>STEP 1. READ.</u>	GOD'S WORD
<i>Read.</i> LET US READ 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

<u>STEP 2. DISCOVER.</u>	OBSERVATIONS
<i>Consider.</i> WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? <i>Record.</i> Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. <i>Share.</i> (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (The following are examples of people sharing what they have discovered. Remember, in every small group, the group members will share different things, not necessarily these things)	

4:3

Discovery 1. Christians should avoid sexual immorality.

The Bible says, "It is God's will ... that you should avoid sexual immorality." We live in a time in which sexual immorality, pornography, premarital sex and rape are on the increase. More and more school children are getting involved. Cheap pocketbooks displaying sexual immorality are sold on the streets and sexual immoral films are shown in the homes of families who possess a TV.

In spite of the fact that the authorities advocate “safe sex” (the use of contraceptives), teenage abortions are dramatically on the increase everywhere in the world. Traditional patterns of relating to the opposite sex are replaced by modern patterns, which include no restraint in the area of sex. Teenagers and even many adults do not know the dangers involved in sexual immorality. They don’t realise that so-called safe sex is not safe at all!

Most young people do not know how to relate properly to the opposite sex. The only examples they have are often the immoral films and pocketbooks and the bad example of their immoral friends. However, I want to learn the principles that are taught in the Bible.

4:1

Discovery 2. Christians are clearly instructed how to live in order to please God.

The Bible says, “We instructed you how to live in order to please God” (verse 1). This passage makes it very clear that people cannot live as they like, especially not in the area relating to the opposite sex. The only thing that pleases God is our sanctification (verse 3). And our sanctification in the area of the opposite sex consists of four things:

- (1) Avoid sexual immorality.
- (2) Learn to control your own body.
- (3) Learn to acquire your life partner in a holy and honourable way.
- (4) Do not wrong any brother in the matter of sexual immorality.

I want to continue to teach these truths to young people everywhere in the world, so that they may learn how to please God.

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

4:1-2

Question 1. What is the difference between sexual immorality and adultery?

Notes. Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”

“Sexual immorality” (Greek: porneia) is every kind of sexual act with anybody besides the person to whom you are married! This includes: all unlawful sexual thoughts, words or deeds. The Book Leviticus calls the following unlawful sexual deeds (behaviour): all forms of sexual acts with a family member (for example indecent stripping, immoral touching, incest); sexual acts with anyone who is not your marriage partner; sexual acts with people of the same sex or sexual acts with an animal (Leviticus 18:6, 20,22,23).

“Adultery” (Greek: moicheia) is every kind of unlawful sexual act with the spouse of another person. It is unlawful interference in another person’s marriage. It includes being the guilty partner of a divorce.

The conclusion is that the Bible very clearly teaches that the only lawful sex is with your marriage partner of another sex and then only after you are married. The Bible warns that God will judge adulterers (Greek: moichous) and all the sexual immoral (Greek: pornous)!

Both words can also refer to unfaithfulness towards God, apostasy from God and idolatry, which is spiritual immorality or spiritual adultery (Jeremiah 5:7-8; Jeremiah 9:2; Ezekiel 16:15-16; Mark 8:38; James 4:4).

4:3-4

Question 2. What is the preferable translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4?

Notes. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 can be understood and translated in three ways and all three are correct.

- “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality and that each of you should learn to control his own vessel.” The vessel is a reference to your own body.
- “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified; that you should abstain from sexual immorality and that each of you should learn to acquire (win) his own vessel.” The vessel is a reference to your future wife or husband.
- “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified; that you should abstain from sexual immorality and that each of you should learn to live with his own vessel.” The vessel is a reference to your own wife or husband.

4:3-4**Question 3. How do I learn to control my own body?**

Notes.

(1) Learn to control your tongue.

Read Ephesians 5:3-4. “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.” The word sexual immorality is used in connection with the tongue. Obscenity is indecent speech like gossiping about the sex-life of people or using sex-words in swearing. Coarse joking is telling dirty jokes or jokes with a sexual connotation. Christians must give healthy sex education to their children and in a serious manner discuss how to develop the sexual relationship inside marriage. However, gossiping or joking about sex is sexual immorality. Among Christians there must not be even a hint of gossip or joking about sex!

(2) Learn to control your eyes.

Read Job 31:1. “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.” All men in the world are particularly tempted by what their eyes see. If a man sees a woman who does not dress properly or does not cover her body in a decent way, then he can get tempted to think sexually immoral thoughts. If a man sees magazines with pictures of immoral women, then he can get tempted to think sexually immoral thoughts. Most of the time, sexual immorality begins with what you see. This triggers immoral thoughts in your mind. This leads to an immoral decision and finally to an immoral act. The battle against sexual immorality begins with what you see, with what you hear and with what you think. Therefore God wrote these words in the Bible: “Make a covenant with your eyes not to look lustfully at a woman.” Make an agreement with God to avoid places that expose immoral women, to avoid looking at sexually immoral sites on the Internet, in magazines or in movies. Avoid reading immoral books. Make an agreement with God that when you encounter such people or such pictures unexpectedly, not to allow your looking to linger longer or to look at them a second time.

(3) Learn to control your heart or mind.

Read Proverbs 6:25. “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.” God has created most women beautiful. Some women, however, misuse their beauty to trap men into unlawful sexual immorality. With the way they dress or with the way they move their bodies or wink with their eyes, they want to seduce men to sexual immorality. Prostitutes all over the world know their own weakness as well as the weakness of men. The centre of control inside every human being is the heart. The heart controls the thoughts of *the mind*, the desires of *the heart* and the choices and decisions of *the will*. Although there are times you cannot help seeing such women, you can always decide not to keep looking at them. The Bible says that you should not even consider their beauty or their efforts to capture you. Do not allow your heart to desire them. Allow the Holy Spirit living in you to control your mind and heart. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, the Bible says that we must “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”.

(4) Learn to control your feet.

Read Proverbs 5:7-10. “Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. Keep to a path far from her, do not go near to the door of her house, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich another man’s house.” Every city in the world has prostitutes and pimps. Every village has women and men of bad reputation. You usually know where they live and where they walk trying to catch people in their traps. Avoid all these places. The Bible says, “Keep to a path far from her; do not go near to the door of her house.” Avoid the red or yellow light district and avoid the bars, massage parlours, discos and clubs where these people are waiting to trap you. Avoid friendship with girls or boys of bad reputation in your school. We must learn to control our feet and not walk close to any of these places.

(5) Learn to control your hands.

Read Proverbs 5:15-21. “Drink water from *your own cistern*, running water from *your own well*. (The reference is to *your own wife*). Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May *your fountain* be blessed, and may you rejoice in *the wife of your youth*. A loving doe, a graceful deer - may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man’s wife? For a man’s ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths.”

The modern way of relating to the opposite sex, either openly or secretly, is characterised by having no boundaries. People think that they can do anything they like without having to fear the consequences. Therefore, many young people do not control their hands. When they are alone with the opposite sex, they often caress any part of the other person’s body and even put their hands under the clothes of the other person. The touch of a man may tempt a woman and therefore men must learn to control their hands. Just like the laws of a country describe the boundaries of social life and traffic laws describe the boundaries of safe driving, likewise the Bible describes the boundaries in the area of sex. We must learn to control our hands and only touch one another in a holy and honourable way.

4:3-4

Question 4. How do I learn to acquire or win a marriage partner?

Notes. For all the above reasons, *Christians must relate to the opposite sex in a different way than the non-Christians do.* The Bible teaches that young men may acquire or win a wife for themselves. However, the Bible teaches very clearly that men may not win a wife in passionate lust. God commands that acquiring or winning a wife must happen in a way that is holy and honourable and not in the way of passionate lust like the heathen. The “holy” way means a way that is different and separated from the way of the sinful world. An “honourable” way refers to a way that is respected by God and by other people (and their culture) alike. God must not be able to condemn your way of acquiring a wife and people must not be able to slander your way of acquiring a wife. During the period of getting to know one another before marriage, men and women must exercise self-control over their bodies! They must control their tongues, eyes, mind, feet and hands. God is the One who has established the boundaries in the relationship between men and women. God has commanded what men and women may *not* do during winning or acquiring one another (called “dating” in modern times). Men and women must avoid sexual immorality.

4:3-4

Question 5. Which boundaries should I establish in relating to the opposite sex?

Notes. Christians must establish boundaries for relating to the opposite sex. Christian parents and Christian leaders must teach these boundaries to the young men and women in their care. When Christian young people start to acquire or win one another as a possible marriage partner, they must establish a few important boundaries together and agree with one another to stay within these boundaries. Their agreement should include clear boundaries in the following four areas and they must choose together the standards that they will maintain in their relationship. Together they should discuss the following issues and find an answer to the following questions.

- (1) Time. When do you meet together? How often do you meet together? How long do you meet together? At what time should you end your meeting together?
- (2) Place. Where do you meet together? To which places may you go? To which places will you not go?
- (3) Activities. What things do you do together? What things will you not do? Acknowledge that God is seeing everything that you are doing.
- (4) Physical contact. So-called “safe sex” (making use of contraceptives) is not safe at all! It is often not safe in the physical area and it is definitely not safe in the spiritual area! The Bible demands abstinence before marriage (Hebrews 13:4). People should agree before God that they will not sleep with one another under any circumstances before marriage. A man and a woman should establish a few clear standards together for their relationship and these standards should be clearly based on the Bible. A man and a woman should answer the following questions together. According to God’s standards in the Bible, what kind of physical contact may we have? What kind of physical contact may we *not* have? What kind of physical contact, although biblically permissible, is not culturally acceptable? What kind of touching will build one another up? What kind of touching, although biblically permissible, does not help the other person?

Conclusion. The way Christian men and women relate to the opposite sex is very different to the way non-Christian men and women relate to the opposite sex. The Bible commands that Christian men and women should relate to the opposite sex in a way that is holy and honourable and not in passionate lust like the non-Christians.

Every person who rejects this instruction from God also rejects God himself (verse 8)!

4:6

Question 6. Who is the brother that may not be wronged?

Notes. Whenever a man does what God forbids and relates to the woman in an unholy and dishonourable way or acquires her in passionate lust like the non-Christians often do, then he always wrongs “his brother”.

This brother that is wronged may either be:

- the father of the woman
- the brother of the woman
- the brothers (and sisters) in the congregation.
- the brother is definitely the future husband of this woman!

The man has the final responsibility and takes the active role in the sex relationship with a woman. Whenever the man sleeps with the woman or acquires her in passionate lust, then he wrongs the other men, who are related to the woman. He wrongfully takes advantage of these brothers, damages their reputation and robs the future husband of acquiring a virgin for a wife. The Bible does not allow these brothers to take revenge in any way, because revenge belongs only to God and “the revenge of God” is the worst that can happen to one (Romans 12:17-21). “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31)!

Whenever Christians have committed sexual immorality, they must realise what they have done, feel genuine remorse and confess their sin to God. Men and women, who have committed the sin of sexual immorality or adultery can receive

forgiveness and can make a complete new start in their lives, but only if they turn to Jesus Christ and genuinely repent of their sin (1 Corinthians 6:7-9).

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application. (Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

- 4:1. Read the Bible with this one question, “How should I live to please God?”
- 4:1. What must I change in order to live more and more a life that is pleasing to God?
- 4:3. What must I do to avoid sexual immorality?
- 4:4. What must I do to control my body in a better way? Never “flirt” with anyone!
- 4:4. If I am still unmarried, what can I do to acquire a wife in a holy and honourable way?
- 4:5. How can I avoid all kinds of passionate lust associated with the non-Christian life-style?
- 4:6. If I have wronged a woman or a brother in the area of sexual immorality, I can repent of this sin, receive forgiveness and make a new and clean start in the area of relating to the opposite sex.
- 4:7. I can write the words “God has called you to live a holy life” on a card and keep it on my table where I can see it everyday.
- 4:8. Never forget that if I reject God’s instructions about sexual immorality and sexual purity, I also reject God.

2. Examples of personal applications 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

I want to learn to control my eyes and my thoughts. I have made an agreement with God not to look at men or women in a lustful way and to deliberately banish sexual immoral thoughts every time they enter my mind.

I want to continue to teach young people everywhere that the Christian way of relating to the opposite sex is possible and a very wonderful way to win your future life-partner. I want to do this Bible study together with all the young people I get a chance to influence.

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

**[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS**

Continue to pray in groups of two’s or three’s. Pray for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6

PREPARATION (2 minutes)

**[ASSIGNMENT]
FOR NEXT LESSON**

(*Group leader.* Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples.
Preach, teach or study the Bible study of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 together with another person or group of people.
2. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Acts 15:1 – 18:17** each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
3. Memorisation. (3) Prayer. **John 15:7.** Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
4. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
5. Update your notebook on making disciples. Include the notes on your personal time with God, memorisation notes, Bible study notes and this preparation.