



I CONFESS...

Stuff Christians struggle with,
but are afraid to admit

Small Group Teaching Guide
APRIL 30, 2017



I Confess: I Have to Battle for Sexual Purity

Week 3, April 30, 2017



PREPARATION

STUDY

Spend the week studying 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation..

DETERMINE

Many questions have been included in this guide. Read through this lesson to determine which questions will work best to encourage, push, and grow your group.

PRAY

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming weekend. Pray also for your time in this week's study and your group's openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT

Living by God's design for sex puts us on a path to holiness.



GROUP DISCUSSION

CONFIDENTIALITY | What's said in the group stays in the group.

NO CROSS-TALK | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

NO FIXING | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

SHARING | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Last week your group looked at the power of confession and how it opens the way for us to experience God's freedom, love and peace in life. This week you will focus on the area of sexual purity. How does God's Word help us in the battle for sexual purity? Do we have any hope of ever winning this battle? This week's discussion will focus on answering these important questions.

Q: *Describe our culture's view of sex. How does it differ from a biblical view?*

Q: *What makes sexual temptation so alluring?*



LEARN

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

| STAY ON THE PATH

When Paul heard the positive report out of Thessalonica, he was simply overjoyed. Despite affliction, these believers had received the Gospel and were growing in their faith! In the process, they had become a great example for other churches in their region. Believers in Thessalonica were on the right path and Paul wanted to keep them moving this direction. But, as we all know, there are many dangers on the path of discipleship. Sin is always crouching on the side of the road, waiting for an opportunity to make its move. That's why Paul wanted to encourage the Thessalonian church to stay on track by living a holy life that would be pleasing to God.

Paul knew this wouldn't be easy. Jesus was calling them to a lifestyle that was radically different than their culture. Sexual sin in the ancient world was often blatant and rampant. So, you can imagine that the temptation for a believer to go back to this lifestyle was a clear and present danger. How was a new Christian to survive in such a culture? Perhaps you've asked the same question in our culture as well.

READ: Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. What stands out to you in this passage?

Q: How does our culture make it difficult to pursue sexual purity?

| YOUR CALLING & POSITION

Paul's answer to this question is that we should have self-control over our bodies "in holiness and honor." Now, he's not telling believers to "tough it out" through sheer will power. Ultimately, that never works. Paul knows that we need something more. We can start by understanding our calling (holiness) and our position (honor).

First, our lives should reflect God's character. One important attribute of God is His holiness. We belong to God and He has called us to be holy like Him. The Christian is called to be different than one who follows after lustful passions like a dog on a leash. Second, we should honor our bodies and the bodies of others. God created us in His image and gave us a body to bring Him glory. Sexual sin disgraces the body because it goes against God's good design for sex.

Q: Why isn't willpower enough to win the battle for purity?

Q: What are some practical ways you can live out your calling to holiness in everyday life?



LIVE

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

Let's look at three practical ways that Paul's words help us stay on the path of living a holy life that is pleasing to God.

| KNOW YOUR DESTINATION

Knowing where you're headed is essential to a successful journey. Without a destination, you can easily get sidetracked or thrown off the path entirely. Paul states clearly that our destination in life is sanctification. In other

words, we are on the path to becoming more and more like Christ. And that part of our journey includes sexual purity.

The best way to enjoy the blessing of sex is to live according to God's design, and God designed sex to be enjoyed in the context of marriage. Sex is saying to someone, "I give myself entirely and exclusively to you." When we go outside the boundaries of marriage for sexual pleasure, we devalue sex. Our focus becomes more about taking from someone rather than giving to them. A right view of sex helps keep our focus on the destination of becoming more like Christ.

Q: *What obstacles can keep us from living a holy life that is pleasing to God?*

Q: *Explain the following statement in your own words: "Sex is saying to someone, "I give myself entirely and exclusively to you."*

| UNDERSTAND THE DANGERS

As mentioned earlier, there are many dangers on the path of discipleship. One of these dangers is sexual sin, which can impact our relationship with God. First, sexual sin hurts God. In the Bible, God repeatedly uses the metaphor of adultery to describe His people's idolatry. Second, sexual sin hurts you. You may think that you can control your sexual desires, only to find that they end up controlling you. Sexual sin is like playing Russian roulette with your health, emotions and relationships. It might thrill you for a time, but the thrill doesn't last. Third, sexual sin hurts others. An affair shatters the trust between a husband and wife. Similarly, pornography devalues a person made in God's image and reduces them to an object for our pleasure.

Q: *What practical things can you do to avoid the danger of sexual sin?*

| DON'T TRAVEL ALONE

Because there are dangers on the path, you should never travel alone. That's why God has given us the Holy Spirit as our companion and guide. The Spirit changes our desires and gives us strength in the battle. The Spirit reminds us of our calling and position in Christ. The only way to win the battle for purity is to be in step with the Spirit. That's why Paul says, "walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

Q: What does it mean to “walk by the Spirit”?



LEAD

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

| LIGHT THE PATH

Unfortunately, talking about sex or sexual sin is taboo in many Christian communities. But, as believers, we need to communicate that sex is a gift from God and that the best way to enjoy it is within the context of marriage. Instead of condemning our culture for its view of sex, let’s persuade others by living differently. Let’s light the path for those around us and show the world that living by God’s design is the best possible path in life.

Q: Why is sexual sin often considered taboo in Christian circles?

Q: How could your group help “light the path” for one another in this area?



PRAY

Spend time praying over the area of sexual purity. What is God telling you about this area of your life? Is there something you need to confess to Him? Pray for the Holy Spirit to remind you of your calling and position as a child of God.



FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read Galatians 5:16-26 and reflect on what it means to be in step with the Holy Spirit.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they have seen God at work in their life.



COMMENTARY

A PURE HEART. Jesus said, “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks,” (Luke 6:45). Real purity comes from the heart. Paul also speaks of the necessity of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).

WHAT MAKES ME HOLY? “The atoning death of Jesus, by meeting the just demands of God’s righteousness (Rom. 3:21–26), makes possible this intimate relationship between God and His people. Jesus, as the true Holy One, does not see decay in His death as the prophetic Scriptures foretold (Ps. 16:10; Acts 13:35). Thus His resurrection signifies the accomplishment of salvation and the inauguration of the age of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:4) in which the followers of Jesus are baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). This enduring promise for believers in every generation (Acts 2:38–39) is the empowerment to make them holy: the Holy Spirit makes them so (Rom. 15:16).”¹

SANCTIFIED. “To set apart or make holy.” In the OT, God called the Israelites to be holy. That is, they were to be distinct from other nations (Exod. 19:5–6; Lev. 20:23–26; Deut. 26:18–19).² God sanctifies us and declares that we have been set apart for His purposes (see 2 Tim. 2:20–21). When we live inside His purposes, we live holy lives and show others what God’s holiness looks like.

ENDNOTES:

1. Cabal Ted, “Holy,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 773.

2. Douglas J. Moo, “The Letters and Revelation,” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2443.