

The Royal Wedding: Wonderful, beautiful, romantic, but Christian? Lots of liturgy and Scripture, to be sure, but the couple had been living together for a few years already. The consensus among the media seemed to be that this is simply how it is done now. One commentator that Ginger & I heard went so far as to say that “This is as it should be.” It may be normal for couples to do so, but that doesn’t exactly make it right.

Learn how to live in such a way that your life will be pleasing to God.

- I. Abound more and more in obedience 4:1-2
- II. In your private life Holiness 4:3-8
- III. In your church Love 4:9-10
- IV. In your workplace Diligence 4:11-12

- I. Abound more and more in obedience 4:1-2

A. 4:1 **Finally** is more of a marker that we are beginning a new section.

Walk The Bible compares the Christian life to a walk. A few things to note:

1. A walk assumes growth; babies can’t walk at first, but we expect them to do so eventually.
2. A walk assumes freedom; those trapped or enslaved by sin will be hindered in their progress.
3. A walk assumes progress toward some kind of goal. A walk takes us from where we are now to where we ought to be. (See Wiersbe’s *Expository Outlines* for more.)

B. 4:2 **commandments** This word is strictly used of commands received from a superior and transmitted to others. We might think of them as military orders. Paul was giving the church orders that he received from Jesus.

- II. In your private life Holiness 4:3-8

A. 4:3 **God’s will is your sanctification** or *holiness*.

Sexual immorality = *porneia* any sex other than that between one man and one woman who are married to each other. Our words *porn* and *pornography* come from this word, which really has negative connotations. The very fact that the ancient Greeks had such a word indicates that somewhere in the deepest recesses of their hearts, they understood that certain types of sex were inappropriate. On the other hand, much as in our day, they didn’t normally allow that to limit their behavior.

B. 4:4 **possess his own vessel** = control his own body

C. 4:5 **Gentiles** = ethnoi, nations, people groups. The reason the world is controlled by passion and lust is that the nations **do not know God**. They don't grasp the fact that God has given a special place to the sexual bond in a monogamous heterosexual relationship.

D. In both the OT and the NT God has always commanded what seemed like a radical standard of sexual purity for His people, when compared to the people around them.

1. Sexual purity was not a priority in the Mediterranean world. Marriage ceremonies did not include vows of faithfulness. Greek and Roman practice allowed for relations with prostitutes and slaves. Under Roman law, premarital sex was prohibited for males only if an aristocrat were doing it with an upper-class woman (this was called *stuprum*). Otherwise it was pretty much anything goes. (*IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*)

2. But the people receiving this letter were now Christians, so Paul expected a proper response. He was challenging their long held assumptions. The biblical ethic eventually undermined and replaced their previous viewpoints as people began to understand God's perspective.

E. 4:6 Sexual sin always takes advantage of someone or robs them. It distorts the thinking, messes with people's emotions and robs them of the purity people of the purity that so enhances a godly marital bond.

F. An example of purity: Violet, an English lady that Ginger and I met when we were in Poland. For years she was a missionary in Africa. She never married and has spent her whole in loving service to others. Eventually went into ministry among older people connected with the Anglican Church. When I consider her long productive life with all her many wonderful friends, to even imagine that her life was somehow lacking something because she was never involved with anyone sexually would be the most pathetic kind of insult.

G. Paul gives three reasons in this passage for purity (International Bible Commentary):

1. Divine judgment – the Lord will judge us according to our works. (4:6)
2. The calling God has placed upon our lives has a moral component to it. (4:7)
3. Impurity contemptuously ignores the indwelling Spirit of God. (4:8)

Learn how to live in such a way that your life will be pleasing to God.

III. In your church Love 4:9-10

A. 4:9 **philadelphia** brotherly love, the love that exists among siblings. Paul is pointing to the fact that as Christians we all share the same heavenly Father.

Love one another This is the *agape* kind of love. Koine Greek had various kinds of love, but they were sometimes used interchangeably, as is the case here.

B. 4:10 increase more and more Most Christians probably do love one another at the deepest level – or at least they know that they should. Paul knew the Thessalonians did love one another, but wanted to encourage them to love one another even more.

John 13:34-35 NKJV ³⁴*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.* ³⁵*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

John 15:12-13 NKJV ¹²*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* ¹³*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.*

C. With Jesus as our standard our love will always have room to grow.

Learn how to live in such a way that your life will be pleasing to God.

IV. In your workplace Diligence 4:11-12

A. The Ancient Greeks did not highly value manual labor. They considered it beneath the dignity of free men and such work was normally reserved for slaves. Paul is again totally challenging their perspective. Each of the early disciples started out at regular jobs.

1. Jesus started out as a carpenter, or woodworker.
2. Paul worked with his hands when need be as a tent maker.
3. In the case of Peter, Andrew, James and John, they were fishermen. Jesus called them to be apostles when they were at work by the Sea of Galilee.
4. Matthew was at his desk in the customs office when Jesus called him.

The point is this: These were regular working guys. They weren’t born into their positions as apostles. They started out life like the rest of us and knew how to put in a full day’s work.

B. One of the reasons that some of the Thessalonians may not have been working hard enough is due to an incorrect view of the coming of the Lord. Because Paul taught them they needed to be ready at any moment, they assumed that he meant Jesus was coming back right away. They lost their ambition to work and were sitting around waiting for Jesus. This caused two problems:

1. Outsiders, or non-Christians, were beginning to view these Christians as a bunch of lazy oddballs.
2. They lazy oddballs were a drain on the church – basically parasites – always taking but never contributing to anyone else’s need.

Second Thessalonians 3:7-12 NKJV ⁷*For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; ⁸nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, ⁹not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.*

¹⁰*For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. ¹¹For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. ¹²Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.*

Conclusions:

- I. Abound more and more in obedience 4:1-2
 - A. The life of every Christian should be directed by intentional obedience to God.
 - B. If we consider God our Father and we consider Jesus our Lord, then obedience is the response that is most appropriate.

- II. In your private life Holiness 4:3-8
 - A. Purity is detrimental to no one. Innocence is not the same thing as ignorance. Our various wants are not always needs. Permissiveness is not the same as freedom. Nobody has ever died from a lack of sexual indulgence.

- III. In your church Love 4:9-10

First Peter 1:22-25 NKJV ²²Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, ²³having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, ²⁴because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, ²⁵But the word of the LORD endures forever."
Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

- IV. In your workplace Diligence 4:11-12
 - A. **God wants Christians to be characterized by diligence in their work.** Jacob made it a habit to do more than was expected of him. When his flocks were attacked, he took the losses rather than splitting them with Laban. He worked hard even after several pay cuts. His diligence eventually paid off: his flocks began to multiply. Here's what diligence can do:
 - (1) Diligence pleases God – and we want to live a life pleasing to God.
 - (2) Diligence earns recognition and advancement,
 - (3) Diligence enhances our reputation,
 - (4) Diligence builds others' confidence in us,
 - (5) Diligence gives us more experience and knowledge, and
 - (6) Diligence develops our spiritual maturity. (*Handbook of Bible Application*)