

Prototypical Living

Scripture and Background Information for June 11-17.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

A prototype is the original copy of a product. It establishes the essential characteristics of the product and sets the standard for its proper function. It is an example that all other versions of the product must base itself on to continue to work properly. In many ways, the church in Thessalonica is a prototype for all other churches because it exhibits certain qualities that are necessary for a church to thrive. So, as we go through this series, we hope to learn from the example that the Thessalonians have given us so that we can take steps to live in this prototypical way.

Background for 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12:

The Thessalonian church is the prototype that all churches of all times should try to model themselves after. In fact, Paul spent the most of the first three chapters of this letter offering thanksgiving and encouragement because of how the lives of the Thessalonians reflected the Gospel to those around them and many others around the world. But, here in chapter 4, Paul's tone changes slightly and he calls the Thessalonians to, "excel still more," so that they will continue to make a great impact in the world through their prototypical living (1 Thess 4:1,10).

In our verses for this week, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of three things that will be crucial to their continued excellence: sexual purity, love, and living a quiet life. First, he tells them to abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thess 4:1-8). Paul frames this as something that will hinder the Thessalonians' ability to mature in faith. It is God's will that they would be sanctified but if they give in to sexual immorality, they will not grow in the ways that God had intended. Next, Paul calls them to love one another (1 Thess 4:9-10a). They have been taught by God what it means to love one another well so they need to continue loving others in this way. Lastly, Paul urges the Thessalonians to live a quiet life (1 Thess 4:10b-12). Living in this way leads to a greater ability to preach the Gospel and brings favor with those around them who aren't Christians. Following Paul's instructions on these three topics was vital to the Thessalonians' ability to be the prototype church, so we should take these exhortations seriously, too.

Insights and questions to engage with the text:

1. How does God help His people, "excel still more," in their faith?
2. Who are people in your life who are a prototype for what it looks like to "excel still more"?
3. What do you think it means for you to, "excel still more," in your faith? What steps would you need to take to accomplish that?
4. If we did these three things well (sexual purity, loving others, living a quiet life) what do you think would change in our world? What are some ways that you can live out these three commands in your life to impact those around you?