

22 Commandments: 11-week Devotional Series on 1 Thessalonians 5



*Living at the foot of the cross,
encouraging all women to see God in the ordinary*

22Commandments
allisonTcain.com

Encouraging ALL women to see God in the ordinary

22 Commandments

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Introduction

In this 11-week devotional series, I incorporate the skills I introduce in my Bible study, *In the Mi[God]dle*, with reflections from *The Whisper of God* devotional. My prayer is that, through these combined resources, your devotional time will launch you into a deeper relationship with our Father in Heaven and give you a solid foundation in His word.

How to use this devotional

First things, First!

Before you begin this devotional, pray God opens your mind to His word. He wants to help us and all we have to do is ask.

Look up and write out these verses:

Jeremiah 33:3-

Luke 11:9-

James 1:5-

What are these verses saying? Ask and receive the Holy Spirit's direction before you begin each day. You don't need a long prayer. Just a simple, "Father, please open my heart and mind to Your written Word today so that I may draw closer to You." He wants to help you, and all you have to do it ask.

After each devotion, is a section for you to write your thoughts and revelations. You may need more space, so I encourage you to pick up one of those empty journals (if you are like me) and start filling it up.

Below is the format for each devotion. Take your time. We never do that these days. Read just one a week, sit on the scriptures in the devotion, think about them, reflect and listen. I pray God does some amazing things in your life and in your relationship with Him as you take this journey.

Monday- Find a Word

Choose a word from the devotion or cited scriptures to reflect on for the week. Some examples: sovereign, righteous, almighty, full, uphold, future, hope, love, obedience.

Use your Bible index/reference or search your favorite online Bible the scriptures containing the word you chose. Write out at least five of the verses you find. We will go back and read them after we have compiled the list.

Go back to read the five verses and make notes in your journal about each one. Pray God will open your mind to understand His word and your heart will receive a fresh revelation from Him. As you reflect on the scriptures, ask yourself what you think God wants you to hear.

Tuesday – Define

Choose one or two words from each Bible verse that you want to look up in the dictionary. Write out the words and their definitions. Then, reread the scriptures and replace each word with its definition. How did it take your scriptural understanding to a new level?

For example:

Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.” Joel 2:13 (emphasis mine)

Gracious – kind, polite, generous

Abounding - great in number or amount

Relents - to become more sympathetic, to surrender, to give in and become less intense

I don't know about you, but when I reread the scriptures and replace those words with their definitions, I gain new meaning, feeling and understanding that I otherwise may have missed or passed over.

Wednesday – Translate

Choose two to three different Bible translations and read the Monday verses in each. I like to use the King James, NIV and The Message translations. You may have another favorite. Using an online Bible resource like biblegateway.com will help a lot. Write out the verses in your journal or on another sheet of paper.

Thursday – Respond

We are accountable for our actions and thoughts. Think about your week. Are you on the right track with God, your family, your children, your life, etc.? If not, what changes do you feel you need to make?

Friday – Prayer

Reflect on the verses you've studied, and through prayer, thank God for all He revealed to you during the week.

I pray that through your commitment and study God knocks your socks off!

Week 1 - Be The Sunshine

God answered a prayer for me last week and revealed some new commandments (guidelines for Christians) that Paul penned so very long ago (see last week's blog if you missed it). He had me live out the first two out this past week. He often does this when I'm teaching or studying His word. It isn't always easy, but certainly gives me a deeper understanding and stronger faith that I'm so very grateful for. As I typed this out last week, my stomach was turning and in knots, my head swimming and my heart a bit heavy. No, not from a stomach bug, but from a very important family decision that had been boiling up for a month.

Therefore (1) encourage one another and (2) build one another up, just as you are doing. We ask you, brothers, to (3) respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and (4) to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. (5) Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, (6) admonish the idle, (7) encourage the fainthearted, (8) help the weak, (9) be patient with them all. (10) See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but (11) always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. (12) Rejoice always, (13) pray without ceasing, (14) give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (15) Do not quench the Spirit. (16) Do not despise prophecies, (17) but test everything; (18) hold fast what is good. (19) Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. Brothers, (20) pray for us. (21) Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to (22) have this letter read to all the brothers. 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25

This week I was looking at Paul's first and second commandment 1 – encourage one another and 2 – build each other up. I always have the opportunity to encourage and build others up. Some may say it's because of my role as Christian author/speaker, but I have been this way since birth. It's truly how God made me. Long before God placed any of this ministry in my lap, my husband would say to me, after a complete stranger would tell me their deepest secrets or struggle in the check-out line of Food Lion, that I must have an invisible sign around my neck everyone else could see saying, "Please tell me your story, I'll listen". That said, it's very natural for me listen, encourage and build others up, but very difficult for me to reach out sometimes and be the vulnerable one who lets her guard down and shares my struggle.

This week God allowed me to live out the experience of RECEIVING encouragement and being built up. I'm still a little shell-shocked as it all happened so fast. As God would have it, as this critical moment came to a head in our family, I had dinner scheduled with a dear Christian friend, breakfast with two people who have adopted me as family and who love my children like nieces and nephews, an afternoon play date with a fellow mom with a Christian heart the size of Texas and dinner with another friend who always offers kind and wise advice (don't let her cute blond hair fool you). As I shared with them, took EVERY opportunity to love, listen, encourage and remind me of who I am. I'm not kidding. There is no question that God had that 24 hours of my life scheduled with all those people back to back for a reason. First, He knew I would need to live out what I am studying in His word to make it real and known to me, but mostly, He knew that I would need to be surrounded by those who love me so they could remind me who was in

charge, all would work out, who I am in Him and that His hand was in every detail. Simply put God knew I would need a little encouragement and building up! Boy, was He right!

And what a difference it made in my heart, my mind and my soul. We are never alone and as my wise friend Kim said, “We were never made to carry all this alone.” Christ is always with us and He sends other believers alongside us to put His feelings and love into words. God made sure my schedule was full of amazing, loving, Christian friends for an entire 24-hour period at the peak of this situation with our daughter*, but what if those believers didn’t take the time to encourage and build up while I was with them. I can imagine God would have been disappointed and worked it out another way, but it would have taken me longer to see the positives and to get out of the pit. We have to act! As Christians, we can’t stop at “do not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20). We have to take it past that, and take every opportunity to encourage others in their walk, faith and lives. We have to build them up, not with pride, but with confidence in who they are and who God says they are.

I think God is asking us, “What will you do now that you know and believe I sent my son to die for you? What will you do now that you believe my son died to cover every sin in your life?” This list Paul gives the Thessalonians, I believe, is the answer to that. Well, next week we move on to 3 – respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and 4 – to esteem them very highly in live because of their work. Looking forward with anxious

excitement to see how God drives this one home.

*So we don’t seem to mysterious, I’ll tell you. Our daughter was working through the idea of going back into public school and joining her friends in their first year of middle school. This was a very emotional and big decision for our family after a great year of homeschooling, but one we encouraged her to work through and take on. God often answers prayers in ways we never imagined. This has been one of those times and I’m so grateful for those who helped me remain in Him and remember who loves her more than I do!



Monday – Find a word

Choose a word from the devotion or cited scriptures to reflect on for the week. Some examples: sovereign, righteous, almighty, full, uphold, future, hope, love, obedience.

What is your word? _____

Search your Bible commentary. What verses use your word? List them here. Use your journal if you need additional space.

Tuesday – Define

Choose one to two words to define and then reread the scriptures, replacing the word with the definition. How did it take your understanding to a new level?

Wednesday – Translate

Choose two or three different Bible translations. Read the Monday verses (cited in the devotional or found in your study) in each translation. Now write them in your journal.

Thursday - Respond

Think about your week. Has God been whispering?

Friday – Prayer

Close your eyes and talk to God or write out your prayer in your journal.

Week 2 - Very Highly

Continuing on in our study of Thessalonians 5, this week we are looking at Paul's 3rd, 4th and 5th guideline/commandment (out of 22) for all Christians.

We ask you, brothers, to (3) respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and (4) to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. (5) Be at peace among yourselves 1 Thessalonians 5:11-13

The Senior Pastor at our church has been on sabbatical to prepare for the year and take a break to reconnect and recharge with God. It's a time much-needed rest for him and gives other campus pastors time to preach. They each have amazing skills, gifts and passions. I never leave

before telling them how much a message or worship time moved me. Whether you are in ministry, a mom, wife, leader or mentor, we all need to feel respected, loved and esteemed. It isn't about pride, but encouragement and love. We should ask ourselves, "How can I not encourage and love those who bring me closer to Christ?"

When Paul was writing to the Thessalonians, he was writing to a group of people who all became believers at the same time and with great passion. It was the first church. I can imagine that when their different gifts began to surface (some teaching, some prophesying, etc.) it would have been easy to begin to have feelings of jealousy or insecurity. I can hear it now, "Tom was just a goat herder like me and now he is teaching everyone about the Lord. I became a believer the same time he did. Why am I not having the same impact? Who does he think he is?" Honestly, I can relate. Can anyone else? I can easily fall prey to those same feelings of insecurity and jealousy myself sometimes. I wonder: is anyone listening, are these messages bringing others close to Christ, who am I do have this role after all I've done?

Paul knew these new believers would need to be reminded to respect those who labor to teach and lead their hearts to Christ. It can be challenging to rise above personal issues, but we are called to "esteem them very highly in love because of their work." I love how Paul says to esteem them not just highly, but "very highly". Can you imagine the peace this would bring to those we know and who serve us? This week, let's consider how we can respect and love on those who encourage us and teach us through the word of God. I have a list of people who have helped me grow in Christ. How about you?

Therefore (1) encourage one another and (2) build one another up, just as you are doing. We ask you, brothers, to (3) respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and (4) to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. (5) Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, (6) admonish the idle, (7) encourage the fainthearted, (8) help the weak, (9) be patient with them all. (10) See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but (11) always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. (12) Rejoice always, (13) pray without ceasing, (14) give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (15) Do not quench the Spirit. (16) Do not despise prophecies, (17) but test everything; (18) hold fast what is good. (19) Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. Brothers, (20) pray for us. (21) Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to (22) have this letter read to all the brothers. 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25

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What is your word? \_\_\_\_\_

Search your Bible commentary. What verses use your word? List them here. Use your journal if you need additional space.

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### Tuesday – Define

Choose one to two words to define and then reread the scriptures, replacing the word with the definition. How did it take your understanding to a new level?

### Wednesday – Translate

Choose two or three different Bible translations. Read the Monday verses (cited in the devotional or found in your study) in each translation. Now write them in your journal.

### Thursday - Respond

Think about your week. Has God been whispering?

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### Friday – Prayer

Close your eyes and talk to God or write out your prayer in your journal.

## Week 3 - Wear Sunscreen

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.  
... Ephesians 6:10-18

If you are just popping in on this blog series (it is summer, I understand), for the past several weeks, I've been in the middle of dissecting 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25. The Lord opened my eyes to this passage about a month ago. It was a huge answer to prayer because I've been asking for more clarity and direction on how to live the life He has called me to. This week we are looking at what I've numbered as 6, 7, 8 and 9 (out of 22) commandments/guidelines Paul lists for us on how to do just that.

**And we urge you, brothers, (6) admonish the idle, (7) encourage the fainthearted, (8) help the weak, (9) be patient with them all. 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25**

Paul says we are to admonish (reprimand & rebuke), encourage, help, but be patient with those who are weak and fainthearted. He isn't speaking of those who are ill or sick instead, he is referring to those of us who are weak in faith and the desire or knowledge to increase that faith. Those are challenging instructions and what occurred to me is that most days I need only look in the mirror to find the person who needs to be admonished, encouraged and helped – Me, myself and I. How do we do all of that rebuking and encouraging with all the patience and love of Christ? This is how God answered my question.

I recently had to have a large area removed from my face where basal cell carcinoma was found growing. I did a little research about it online (of course). Now that we have Google, how can one resist? I learned that there is just a tiny bit of cancer that shows on the surface of the skin and the rest is hidden under the skin, growing roots deeper into our bodily tissue. The longer it is there the deeper it goes unless it's removed.

This cancer, is like the tiny seed of sin, resentment, anger, fear that begins to alter our DNA or, in this case, trust in God. If the sin or trouble is ignored and not addressed, it continues to grow roots deeper and deeper until it has such a tight hold on us it begins to show on the surface through harsh words, more sin, ungodly actions or crippling thoughts. It makes us weak and fainthearted.

We have two options when it comes to dealing with the disease of distrust and sin. First, we can wear sunscreen (armor) to protect us from even contracting the cancer in the first place. That is what the word of God does for us. It protects our hearts and minds, keeping our attention and focus on Christ and the things of honor and praise and not of this world. His Word challenges, rebukes, trains, corrects all while a dose of patience and encouragement. The challenge is remembering and making it a priority to put on the sunscreen (staying in the Word of God).

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8

However, if and when we falter (and we will), we must recognize the cancer growing before it has time to take root in us and cause destruction. How do we remove it? The cure is simple if we take it. First, ask forgiveness, second, seek the Word of God and third, pray for God to give you the courage and strength to remain in Him and live as He has called us to. AND HOPEFULLY, when we falter He will send that loving, patient and encouraging Christian friend to admonish and help us get back on the right path.

Oh, how I ADORE the word of God!



### Monday – Find a word

Choose a word from the devotion or cited scriptures to reflect on for the week. Some examples: sovereign, righteous, almighty, full, uphold, future, hope, love, obedience.

What is your word? \_\_\_\_\_

Search your Bible commentary. What verses use your word? List them here. Use your journal if you need additional space.

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Choose two or three different Bible translations. Read the Monday verses (cited in the devotional or found in your study) in each translation. Now write them in your journal.

### Thursday - Respond

Think about your week. Has God been whispering?

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## Friday – Prayer

Close your eyes and talk to God or write out your prayer in your journal.

## Week 4 - do Good

“See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.”

This is my 5th post in a series on 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25. This week we are looking at what I've numbered as the 10th and 11th (out of 22) commandments/guidelines Paul lists for us on how to live our lives as Christians. These two guidelines really relate back to the Ten Commandments and seem like no brainer. Seriously, if I had a quarter for every time I have said, “Please treat people how you want to be treated – NOT how they treat you.” to my children, I would have enough money to dig 20 wells in Africa. You may say this as often as I do, however, my question for us today is do we live this out? And if so, how? It's so easy to say these words until someone drives by you, blares his horn and gives you the lift of the third finger from your pinky or thumb. It's effortless to remind our children or friend when they are in a situation where someone has wronged them to turn the other cheek, but it's altogether different when we have to harness the anger and do good back to the one who has harmed us.

Therefore (1) encourage one another and (2) build one another up, just as you are doing. We ask you, brothers, to (3) respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and (4) to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. (5) Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, (6) admonish the idle, (7) encourage the fainthearted, (8) help the weak, (9) be patient with them all. (10) See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but (11) always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. (12) Rejoice always, (13) pray without ceasing, (14) give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (15) Do not quench the Spirit. (16) Do not despise prophecies, (17) but test everything; (18) hold fast what is good. (19) Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming

of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. Brothers, (20) pray for us. (21) Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to (22) have this letter read to all the brothers. 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25

This is a muscle that needs constant exercising in my own life. Words are the evil that I deal with most often. As a Christian (privately and publicly as an author) when I'm in a group of people and they find out what I do. Depending on the group, I am instantly judged as whatever they have conceived or experienced Christians to be in the past. It can be a real conversation stopper. However, sometimes it the words that are spoken about me (and not to my face), but other friends that feel evil and can hurt the most. Thankfully, I don't find out about most of the evil words, but when I do, it can be difficult to release it back to God, forgive and forget so that the next time I encounter this person I am not repaying them with the cold shoulder or rude comment. After all, that would be "evil for evil." I've even started practicing going out of my way for some of these people and thoughtfully loving on them with a meal or card. I tell you this not to make you feel sorry for me (because we all deal with this type of evil) or to boast because I can promise you that 10 years ago I was incapable of this and didn't even have the desire to try because God wasn't present in my life as He is today. Sad, but true! Only God can harness evil and that includes the evil in our own hearts – not just the evil in others.

It is God's power, God's strength, God's mercy, God's love, God's patience, God's courage and God's grace that give me the ability to always seek to do good to everyone (despite their actions) – no my own. I'm living proof God can get in a heart, stir things up and revise it to more like His. This isn't easy. In fact, it can be downright painful sometimes. I know loving EVERYONE will continue to become a challenge with each day I wake. Especially as my children grow up and face more trials and evil that I want to protect them from and respond to, but I'm praying I don't lose sight of the fact that by standing firm and keeping a strong grip on Christ, there is hope ("a wonderful hope"), that I will continue to respond in love. Trusting God to handle all the rest.

I want to leave you with these beautiful words that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17.

Now may the Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father,  
who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope,  
comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.

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Monday – Find a word

Choose a word from the devotion or cited scriptures to reflect on for the week. Some examples: sovereign, righteous, almighty, full, uphold, future, hope, love, obedience.

What is your word? _____

Search your Bible commentary. What verses use your word? List them here. Use your journal if you need additional space.

Tuesday – Define

Choose one to two words to define and then reread the scriptures, replacing the word with the definition. How did it take your understanding to a new level?

Wednesday – Translate

Choose two or three different Bible translations. Read the Monday verses (cited in the devotional or found in your study) in each translation. Now write them in your journal.

Thursday - Respond

Think about your week. Has God been whispering?

Friday – Prayer

Close your eyes and talk to God or write out your prayer in your journal.

Week 5 - Blueberry or Cherry Pie?

This is my 6th post in a series on 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25. This week we are looking at what I've numbered as 12,13 and 14 (out of 22) commandments/guidelines Paul lists on how to live our lives worthy of the gospel.

Therefore (1) encourage one another and (2) build one another up, just as you are doing. We ask you, brothers, to (3) respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and (4) to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. (5) Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, (6) admonish the idle, (7) encourage the fainthearted, (8) help the weak, (9) be patient with them all. (10) See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but (11) always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. (12) Rejoice always, (13) pray without ceasing, (14) give thanks in all

circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (15) Do not quench the Spirit. (16) Do not despise prophecies, (17) but test everything; (18) hold fast what is good. (19) Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. Brothers, (20) pray for us. (21) Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to (22) have this letter read to all the brothers. 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25

A few things you should know before you read this story.

1. We homeschooled for the first time last year (my daughter 5th grade & son 2nd grade). No we didn't hate our school, we loved it. God had just been tugging at my heart for over a year to do this for my children.
2. Our plan was to at least homeschool Emma through middle school and Culli through Elementary.
3. Our daughter has struggled with anxiety since she was in the first grade and we have prayed since then God would release her from it.
4. I had a TERRIBLE middle school experience, being exposed to everything from cussing to drugs and alcohol – on top of all the puberty – Yikes!!!

Now that those things are out of the way, walk with me (in your mind) through the Dollar Store as I was about a month ago when my daughter professes out of the blue, “Mom, what would you say if I said I wanted to go to middle school with all of my friends?” We had already had this conversation about 20 times up until this point and she was in NO WAY interested in going to middle school.

So, when the child you have prayed God would release from her anxiety (5 years, I've prayed) stands before you and says, “Mom, I am now 100% sure I want to go to middle school. I want to know I can do it and if someone teases me, I want to know I can stand up for myself.” What's a mom to do? After the shock and upset stomach wore off – I PrAiSeD God. He had answered a huge prayer about my sweet daughter. Not the way I thought he would, but answered!!!

As God would have it, a group of dear friends was coming over for fellowship that evening. They had no idea what was going on with Emma, but a little fun, distraction and good conversation was just what I needed. However, when the time for dessert arrived we ran into a pie problem. When my friend, who had been craving blueberry pie, bought what looked like and was labeled a blueberry pie saw as we cut into it that it was in fact cherry pie – she was devastated. As women we can get like this over dessert! It's true. Not wanting any disappointment that evening, I conspired with another friend who ran out to get her a blueberry pie. After that, we all got a good laugh about it as we enjoyed a little taste of both cherry and blueberry pie that evening. All the while, she was saying, “I know God will teach me something from the pie situation. I'll keep you posted.” Oh, she a woman after my own heart! As promised, the next day she sent an e-mail with this as her lesson.

“sometimes we are looking forward to and planning on the blueberry pie (what we want for our children) but God is busy at work making them cherry pie (what He plans for His children). Rest in knowing either outcome is very sweet, but how pleasing it must be to Him to relish that cherry pie!”

Oh, how sweet is our God?! I don't know if there was another person in the group that needed to hear those words more than I did, but I was so grateful and reminded we should:

(12) Rejoice always, (13) pray without ceasing, (14) give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

So what about my daughter? Long story short, we discussed it, had her journal it, prayed about it, talked about it with other adults we trust and took tours of the school she would attend to help her with the decision and she is going.

Answered prayers and life circumstances don't always look like what we thought they would, should or want them to be, but God is in the details. Keep praying, keep trusting, keep rejoicing and keep thanking Him in every circumstance. I'm clinging to that as the school year (the middle school year!) approaches and trusting that God is in every detail of this cherry pie that I really wanted to be blueberry. In what situation could you do a little more praying, rejoicing and thanking?

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### Monday – Find a word

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What is your word? \_\_\_\_\_

Search your Bible commentary. What verses use your word? List them here. Use your journal if you need additional space.

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### Tuesday – Define

Choose one to two words to define and then reread the scriptures, replacing the word with the definition. How did it take your understanding to a new level?



### Wednesday – Translate

Choose two or three different Bible translations. Read the Monday verses (cited in the devotional or found in your study) in each translation. Now write them in your journal.

### Thursday - Respond

Think about your week. Has God been whispering?

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### Friday – Prayer

Close your eyes and talk to God or write out your prayer in your journal.

## Week 6 - Unquenchable

**You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1**

This is my 7th post in a series on 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25. This week we are looking at what I've numbered the 15th (out of 22) commandment/guideline Paul lists on how to live our lives worthy of the gospel. I pray you have been following along in this series and God is speaking to your heart about how to live your life. I feel it's important to emphasize once again that we can't earn our way into Heaven with acts and great deeds, but when we truly believe in Christ and all He has sacrificed and given to us it's impossible for our hearts, actions and lives to every look the same. This is where Paul's Holy Spirit inspired words come into play.

### **(15) Do not quench the Spirit.**

I have pondered these five words for hours and many thoughts have rolled through my head. If we define quench and Spirit and then reread these five words it does so much to deepen our understanding. Let me throw out a few variations for you:

Do not extinguish the Fountain of Life (Psalm 36:9, 87:7), Do not suppress the Consuming Fire (Deut. 4:24), Do not extinguish the Thirst Quencher (John 4:13-14), and Do not suppress the Spring of Living Water (Jer. 2:13).

These concepts work against human nature because when we have climbed to the tip-top of a mountain (with a REALLY heavy backpack) to enjoy the view, we are thirsty and drink all we can to quench that thirst along the way. (Oh, and the view below was worth every step! This is a

picture my husband and I soaking in God's artistic talents on a recent camping trip with friends.)



Human nature also beckons us to race into action when there is a fire consuming lives, homes and beautiful forests. Our desire to extinguish the damaging deadly fire is so natural we often act without even thinking first. However, when it comes to the Living God, the Holy Spirit who dwells in us we need to work with the opposite frame of mind. Working against human nature and the world. Paul reminds us that we are never to satisfy, extinguish, suppress or quench the Holy Spirit. In other words, we need to look beyond ourselves, our plans, our perceived strengths and rely on that of the Spirit. If I had written this commandment/guideline I would have said, "Quench Yourself, Not the Spirit!" We never want to be rid of the desire to seek our Heavenly Father and follow His plans for us. We never want to extinguish the passion we have to seek Him daily and in all things. I pray God continues to give us an unquenchable thirst for His word, His ways and His plans. He will fill us up each minute, day or hour without tiring, without hesitation and without delay if we only seek Him.

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Monday – Find a word

Choose a word from the devotion or cited scriptures to reflect on for the week. Some examples: sovereign, righteous, almighty, full, uphold, future, hope, love, obedience.

What is your word? _____

Search your Bible commentary. What verses use your word? List them here. Use your journal if you need additional space.

Tuesday – Define

Choose one to two words to define and then reread the scriptures, replacing the word with the definition. How did it take your understanding to a new level?

Wednesday – Translate

Choose two or three different Bible translations. Read the Monday verses (cited in the devotional or found in your study) in each translation. Now write them in your journal.

Thursday - Respond

Think about your week. Has God been whispering?

Friday – Prayer

Close your eyes and talk to God or write out your prayer in your journal.

Week 7 - Study It! Don't Despise it

This is my 8th post in a series on 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25. This week we are looking at what I've numbered as the 16th (out of 22) commandment/guideline Paul lists on how to live our lives worthy of the gospel.

Do not despise prophecies (ESV) Do not treat prophecies with contempt (NIV) don't stifle those who have a word from the Master (MSG) 1 Thessalonians 5:20

Prophecy is defined as “the foretelling or prediction of what is to come, something that is declared by a prophet, especially a divinely inspired prediction, instruction, or exhortation; a divinely inspired utterance or revelation” Based on this definition I have personally concluded that the prophecies Paul is referring to is God’s written word (the Bible). God didn’t write each book of the Bible Himself, with pen in hand, but He divinely inspired the writers of this great collection of books. The author of 1 Thessalonians (Paul) is one of those who God divinely inspired.

If we are to live lives worthy of the gospel, one of the commandments Paul includes in his instructions is “do not despise the Bible and what it says.” This struck a chord with me as I started to roll those words around in my mind. Let me drive it home. Paul is saying: Do not abhor the Bible and its Biblical teachings from the prophets He divinely inspired. Do not detest it. Loathe it, condemn it, scorn it or disdain it. Do not consider the Bible and its teachings unworthy of regard or meaning.

Whoa! Did that raise a feeling within you as you read those words? My first instinct is to say, “No problem, I can cross this one off my list. I don’t disregard, despise or detest the Word of God. Next!” However, the Holy Spirit quickly reigned me in as I considered the possibility that when I don’t study God’s word and know it as I should I can’t treat it with the love it deserves. We should never consider ourselves above studying God’s word, living by it and using it as our guiding force. If we brush God’s divinely inspired Words that He wrote to us aside, ignore them, save them for a rainy day, just listen to what others tell us about it or dismiss them as irrelevant in our daily lives we are failing to live in a way that honors Christ. Paul is very clear when he states, “**Do not despise prophecies.**” This ancient text is still alive, relevant and active. It’s God STILL speaking to us!

What can you do this week to start loving more prophesy, prophets and scripture? How can you work God’s divinely inspired word into your daily life so you are loving it and not despising it? I would love to hear from you and how you are planning to make a difference in studying God’s word. I always need all the tips I can get. Let’s work together!

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### Monday – Find a word

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What is your word? \_\_\_\_\_

Search your Bible commentary. What verses use your word? List them here. Use your journal if you need additional space.

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### Tuesday – Define

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### Wednesday – Translate

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### Thursday - Respond

Think about your week. Has God been whispering?

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### Friday – Prayer

Close your eyes and talk to God or write out your prayer in your journal.

## Week 8 - Try It On!

This is my 9th post in a series on 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25. This week we are looking at what I've numbered as the 17th and 18th (out of 22) commandments/guidelines Paul lists on how to live our lives worthy of the gospel. We are nearing the end of our adventure with Paul and I'm looking forward to seeing what God places on my heart next, but for this week we are focusing on the commandments to:

### **(17) test everything; and (18) hold fast to what it good**

Recently, my daughter and I were doing a little back to school shopping. We went through the entire girl's section and grabbed everything that looked cute or that we thought would look cute on. (We like to have fashion shows in the dressing room.) We ended up with over 16 items and headed into the dressing room. After trying each piece on and deciding "it's too small, too low cut, just right or not cute enough to pay full price for." we ended up buying only six of the items. Like most things we purchase, we want to try them out, get a recommendation, do a background check or read the reviews before we buy it. If we don't, we make sure the store has a good return policy.

We need to be smart shoppers in our Christian lives too. Simply put, in these verses, Paul is saying, "Don't be gullible, foolish or unsuspecting. Don't be easily taken in or taken advantage of. Ask questions, seek the truth, respond with wisdom and discernment." What's interesting to me is that in saying those things, he is also telling us to be suspicious, unbelieving and untrusting. He is taking a concept straight from Jesus's playbook.

**"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Matthew 10:16**

This reminds me of the way we teach our children to respond to strangers. The delicate balance of being polite and saying hello if spoken to (when I'm with you) or run like the wind never believing any tall tales about delicious candy or lost dogs. I just had this talk with my children again, going overboard to make the point as I usually do, but hoping it will make a lasting impression on them. Remember what you have been taught, don't be tricked or fooled. Stop and think! Use good judgement and wisdom. It's sad when I have to teach them to be suspicious and untrusting. There really are still good people in the world, we just don't read much about them in newsfeeds.

However, it's one thing when a child acts suspicious or untrusting. We almost expect it or understand it because of safety concerns, but as adults we often think it's rude to ask questions, be untrusting and suspicious. Paul is reminding us that as Christians there will be those who come along and offer new ideas, interpretations, question the Word of God, want to water it down and counter all we know to be true. Stop! Think! Don't be gullible! Don't just jump in – test it! Stick a toe in before you jump and compare it to what we know is Truth and the word of God. The trick is – we have to be in the Word to know the Word and to know the Word we have to read the Word! So jump into what is good because God doesn't change.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17

Hold tight to the Truth and what is good. Do not let the wolves and shifting shadows of this world distract you, cause you to stumble or forget to be wise and discerning. Stop, listen, question and hold tight to what is good. It's OK to be untrusting and suspicious while we take time to think and reflect before taking action.

Hold tight to what is good!

Therefore (1) encourage one another and (2) build one another up, just as you are doing. We ask you, brothers, to (3) respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and (4) to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. (5) Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, (6) admonish the idle, (7) encourage the fainthearted, (8) help the weak, (9) be patient with them all. (10) See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but (11) always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. (12) Rejoice always, (13) pray without ceasing, (14) give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (15) Do not quench the Spirit. (16) Do not despise prophecies, (17) but test everything; (18) hold fast what is good. (19) Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. Brothers, (20) pray for us. (21) Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to (22) have this letter read to all the brothers. 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25 (numbers aren't verses, but the numbers I gave them for each directive/commandment)



### Monday – Find a word

Choose a word from the devotion or cited scriptures to reflect on for the week. Some examples: sovereign, righteous, almighty, full, uphold, future, hope, love, obedience.

What is your word? \_\_\_\_\_

Search your Bible commentary. What verses use your word? List them here. Use your journal if you need additional space.

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### Tuesday – Define

Choose one to two words to define and then reread the scriptures, replacing the word with the definition. How did it take your understanding to a new level?

### Wednesday – Translate

Choose two or three different Bible translations. Read the Monday verses (cited in the devotional or found in your study) in each translation. Now write them in your journal.

### Thursday - Respond

Think about your week. Has God been whispering?

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### Friday – Prayer

Close your eyes and talk to God or write out your prayer in your journal.

## Week 9 - Kick It!

This is my 10th post in a series on 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25. This week we are looking at what I've numbered as the 19th (out of 22) commandments/guidelines Paul lists on how to live our lives worthy of the gospel.

**(19) Abstain from every form of evil. (Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.)**

In other words, if anything is suspect – leave it. If you only slightly question it – don't do it. Kick it out of your life. Anything that appears evil – don't do it. Paul makes it very clear, but it isn't as easy as it sounds. Paul knew that too because look what he does next. For the first time in this entire list of commandments he adds in a little prayer. Paul was a servant to God, but he was also human. He knew how we would REALLY need the Lord's help to overcome the power of sin. Like Pastor Mike says, "If sin wasn't fun, we wouldn't do it." Amen!

Unfortunately, Pastor Mike is right. Let's be honest. Sin is fun – for a little while, anyway. Whether it's participating in a little gossip, making decisions without including your husband, taking that item from the office they will never miss anyway, surfing a website that is "inappropriate" or indulging in one more glass of wine that puts you over the top – it can feel good and be fun for the moment, but quickly that feeling is gone and you are left only with the shame and guilt of your actions.



It was freeing to me to finally realize ten years ago that I was incapable of abstaining evil on my own. It really takes a lot of pressure off when you know *only* God has the power to help you overcome sin. Stay in touch with Him through His word and prayer. Only He can make you whole, keep your paths straight and your heart clean. Count on Him. He will never leave you or forsake. God is on your side. He will come through for you. You can depend on Him. As Paul prayed, “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”

### Monday – Find a word

Choose a word from the devotion or cited scriptures to reflect on for the week. Some examples: sovereign, righteous, almighty, full, uphold, future, hope, love, obedience.

What is your word? \_\_\_\_\_

Search your Bible commentary. What verses use your word? List them here. Use your journal if you need additional space.

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### Thursday - Respond

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## Friday – Prayer

Close your eyes and talk to God or write out your prayer in your journal.

## Week 10 - Even Jesus Did it!

This is my 11th post in a series on 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25. This week we are looking at what I've numbered as the 20th (out of 22) commandments/guidelines Paul lists on how to live our lives worthy of the gospel.

### (20) pray for us

In the past few weeks three HUGE prayer requests have been answered for friends. HUGE, meaning life and death. One friend, had three strokes and found out she has a hole in her heart. We fervently prayed for her complete healing – she is now home and has no signs or residual problems from her three strokes and awaiting surgery to close the hole in her heart. Another answer came for the brother of a dear friend who had been ill for years using pain medication and alcohol. After the death of his longtime sweetheart, we all feared he would fall deeper into depression, sickness and addiction so we prayed and prayed. It brought tears to my eyes when I heard last week he had been sober, well, going to church and meeting with a support group in the past few months. And, drum roll please . . . just last night my friend Carey received the lung transplant we have been praying for her to receive. She is in surgery as I type this morning. “Pray for us!” Paul says.

Prayer is powerful!!! When Jesus walked this earth He used prayer to heal the sick, bring the dead to life, heal the demon possessed and make the blind see. Read Mark 9:14-29 for the story of when He healed the demon possessed and take note of His last words. He [Jesus] replied, **“This kind can come out only by prayer.”** Mark 9:29 Also, when Jesus raised Lazarus (who had been dead four days) he prayed this, **“Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”** John 11:41-42

Even the most perfect person who has ever walked this Earth, Jesus, the Son of God, prayed when in need and to give thanks. Living the Christian life means reaching out to God to give thanks for who He is, was and always will be. It means giving thanks for all the blessings we have and it praying for others and ourselves. Living the Christian life includes interceding for others who are sick, hurt or afflicted with our prayers and petitions.

Who in your life needs prayer? Will you make a commitment to carve out a little time each day this week to spend in prayer with God? I pray you will and that He will show you that He is present and listening.



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### Thursday - Respond

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## Friday – Prayer

Close your eyes and talk to God or write out your prayer in your journal.

## Week 11 - A Holy Kiss

This is my 12th and final post in a series on 1 Thessalonians 5:11-25. This has been an eye opening passage for me and I pray it has been for you as well. This week we conclude by looking at what I've numbered as the 21st and 22nd commandments/guidelines Paul lists on how to live our lives worthy of the gospel.

**(21) Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to (22) have this letter read to all the brothers.**

My first thought was maybe these shouldn't count in my list of 22 commandments from Paul, but honestly, the list doesn't seem complete without them. So, my second thought was, "What is a Holy kiss?" As I looked, I found it several others times in scripture (Romans 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20 and 2 Cor. 13:12). In other translations, it's called a "sacred kiss or holy embrace." It is a greeting of pure, sincere love. Similar to the handshake most of us use today (or in my case, a hug).

I had a realization as these scriptures sunk in. I feel as if Paul is saying, "Go everywhere you can, spread the Good News, greet all you meet with love and share the amazing love of Christ without judgement or condemnation." Centuries have passed, but we are called to continue that same work. It started with the first church, but lives on in us with Paul's instructions still just as meaningful to us as it they were then to his people.

For me, this is most convicting of all. It's one thing to try and live all of Paul's directives out, but another to share the Gospel with others in a way that shows love, respect and sincerity. He reminds us to put aside the fear of sharing, the fear of being judged when we share and rid ourselves of the tendency to judge after we have shared and don't get the reaction we think the Gospel deserves. We are to present the Gospel with "A Holy Kiss".

Who can you approach this week with a Holy Kiss and share the amazing message of the Gospel?

I'm going to miss this study and series on Thessalonians. God has shown me so much. I would love to hear from you and what part of this series stands out to you. Next week, I'm going to start another series on the greatest man who ever lived – Jesus! I want to take a deeper look into His life, who He was, who scripture says He is and what He said about certain things when He walked this Earth. I hope you will join me on my next adventure through scripture.

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