

# Living It Up! (2)

## The Journey Part 15

**The Purpose of This Series-** This series is entitled “The Journey” particularly for the purpose of learning to live the affective and fruitful life of a believer. These thirteen messages are shared to give the believer, young or old, new or seasoned, a clearer picture of the life intended for them and what God has for them. I believe this series will help the believer tie up some loose end and help them walk with confidence and abundance.

**The Purpose of This Message-** This is our final message of the series, “The Journey.” Today is a powerful message for us to understand how we are to place our minds and thoughts on Christ understanding that Christ will come again! Last week we talked about the ten kinds of people that we deal with, how we are to respond toward others. Today we will talk about how to respond to God and how God responds to us. This will be an encouraging message full of God's will for you!

I recently heard Joshua Harris, author of “I Kissed Dating Goodbye,” tell the story of a time when he was in an airport. And as he was sitting, waiting at the gate for his plane to arrive, he noticed a woman and her teenage daughter reading a magazine by a well known false religion. They deny the deity of Christ, and believed that works were a major factor in your attempt to go to heaven. His curiosity raised as he watched these two read this magazine.

What he had realized is that they were actually members of this cult, and they were reading this magazine as a form to spread their beliefs. It was essentially funny to watch them read, because they were not just quietly reading the magazine, they were **READING** their magazine so everyone could see. If it were possible to read something loudly without using words, that's what they were doing. They were sitting there nodding their heads, their body language was as if it were a pool of water and they were wanting to dive in. They were making all kinds of noises as they read it with “hummm's” and “ahhhhh's” constant as they read the pages. It sounded so appealing that you would have thought they were eating the best candy bar you could find.

What he noticed next is that they both laid down their magazines and pushed them toward the seat next to them. The obvious strategy is that those sitting near by would become so interested because of the performance of these two that people would naturally say, “Ummm, that magazine looks so delicious, so I'll pick it up and see what's in it!” Like it was a favorite candy bar. Of course Joshua was tempted to go up behind them and say, “Hey, you left your magazine on the chairs back there, you need to take these with you!”

It was a sad display, a little cheesy, but they get an A for effort. Something in what they did makes you aware that at least they are doing something. And often in our Christian walk we get lost in what that “something” is.

Paul writes to the Thessalonian's to give definition of that “something.” As I have explained in the last few weeks, Paul's letter written to these Thessalonians gives several directives about several areas of their live:

- **(4:1-12)** Their personal walk before God. (purity, holiness (4:9-12)
- **(4:13-18)**, The return of Christ back to this world, calling the believers in Christ on this

earth up to him and those who have gone before us.

- **(5:1-11)**, The Day of The Lord, telling of those who miss the great taking away and are left on earth after Christ returns for His own. The Day of The Lord is the fulfilling of Revelation.
- **(5:12-15)**, In light of Christ returning for His own and the Day of The Lord, “How Do We Live Until Then?” This portion of scripture teaches us ten biblical responses towards others, it shows how we are to treat each other.

### **How We Respond To Others (10 Biblical Responses Toward Others)**

- **Respect** those who:
    1. Who **work hard among you**,
    2. Who are **over you** in the Lord,
    3. Who **admonish you**.
  - 4. **Live in peace** with each other.
  - 5. **Warn** those who are idle.
  - 6. **Encourage** those who are timid
  - 7. **Help** those who are weak
  - 8. **Be patient** with everyone
  - 9. **Make sure** no one pays wrong for wrong
  - 10. At all times **be kind** to each other and everybody else.
- **(5:16-28)**, Today I want to continue on the thought of how we live until Christ returns, last week is Biblical Ways To Respond To Others, and today we are going to look at three things in LIVING IT UP!

#### **1. Three Biblical Ways To Respond To God**

#### **2. Biblical Ways God Responds To Us**

### **I. Three Biblical Ways To Respond To God**

**<sup>16</sup>Be joyful always; <sup>17</sup>pray continually; <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

#### **1. BE JOYFUL ALWAYS** (v. 16).

- **Philippians 4:4**- Paul told us to “*rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice!*”
- **1 Peter 1:8**- Peter writes that we have “*joy unspeakable.*”

Friday night I watched the last part of a movie based on the true story of Chris Gardner called, “***The Pursuit of Happiness.***” Will Smith plays the part of Chris who is an on-and-off-homeless salesman-turned stockbroker.

You are taken in by the desperation of this mans life, trying to find work and provide for his little son as well. As he interns for a brokerage firm with hopes to get hired you see his struggles as he sleeps sometimes in bathrooms, on trains, in shelters, anywhere he could bunk down. He constantly studies and goes through an unsurmountable amount of obstacles where he finally all his hopes and dreams come true and he is hired by the firm.

The picture that moved my heart is when they called him in. It was the last day of his, and many others, internship. It was the day that all but one would be asked to come on board with the firm. You could see that there was nothing else in his life to do, this was it.

The character that Will plays is called in the main office. He stands preparing himself as the men in the huge glass office extend their hands to him to welcome him aboard. You could see that he could not express any joy because he was on the verge of tears. This joy went much deeper. It wasn't expressed in high-five's or loud jubilation, but one that shook him nearly to his knees. It was so deep that as soon as he left the office building to gather with the hundreds of others walking down the streets his hands were lifted in jubilation, not the touch down kind...much more. It was absolutely "inexpressible!"

## Real Joy

Let's look first what joy doesn't mean. There are basically four concepts of happiness. People live in each one of these dimensions on a daily basis and the problem is, most people don't know that they are spending their life basically to fulfill their hunger for happiness.

1. **I'll be happy all the time when...** There is plenty in this life that can let you down or create the opposite of happiness. The absence of disappointment is not a luxury of this life. Actually, "frustration is the evidence of unmet expectations." As you know, frustration can move in and out of our life in an instance, when we are less suspecting it. There are millions believing that their happiness is based upon an object, a certain relationship or opportunity. I'll be happy when...
2. **I'll be happy all the time because I choose to do so.** There is no doubt that I love to be around positive people. I believe that the most positive people I have ever met understand that people and things are not the key to making you happy. They realize that happiness is a position of the mind, a decision on how to respond to life no matter what the situation. That is a powerful way to live and few people ever master it, and those who do have an incredible payback of the same.
3. **I'll be happy when I don't care about anything.** Actually, this is the purpose of the Buddhist's chants and meditations. If I can push everything out of my mind, then I will not be in any want. It is a matter of finding myself in nothingness. It is believing that the only thing to conquer is me caring about anything. Too many people have this point of view without ever realizing it. They don't attach themselves to anything for the fear of disappointment. I believe that is the main reason why men have a problem with intimacy and emotional connection.

***"Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."~ Albert Schweitzer***

Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, writes,

**“Our mandate is simple: raise up a generation that can openly display the raw power of God.”**

There is no doubt that he is talking about the power of God being displayed in signs and wonders and other mighty manifestations, but I believe that one of the great displays of the raw power of God is knowing how to live a life reconciled to God and in loving relationship with man. It takes the power of God!

I believe that there is a generation who wants more than anything else the open display of the raw power of God. Something that goes beyond an explanation or definition. I love God's ability to defy our understanding, imagination and experience. But this raw power of God demands something else of us. To not only desire that He would display Himself to us and others, but that He would display Himself through us in powerful living until He comes.

Like the two people at the airport, often we could be caught living a stealth Christian life. It could be better said as, “Ninja” Christian Living.

**Ninja**- was a **covert agent** or **mercenary** of feudal Japan specializing in unorthodox arts of war. The functions of the ninja included **espionage, sabotage, infiltration, assassination**, as well as open combat in certain situations.

They were trained, hidden, clothed in black, hidden in the corners of the room, hanging from the ceilings, they are all around us...they are here now! They have the ability to be completely silent, to infiltrate a room without ever being noticed. That is the kind of Christian life that most of us feel comfortable with.

We want to share our Christian faith without people ever knowing we were there.

- It's like someone is walking down the street and they feel something in their pocket and say, “Who put this, ‘*More Than A Carpenter*’ in my pocket?” Ninja, Ninja, Ninja...
- Or someone down the street from you gets in their car, starts it up and all of a sudden their radio is playing KJIL. They think, well that's funny, my radio is on a Christian radio station. Ninja!

In the life that you and I are asked to live, there is no place for the Ninja Christian. Our life is very open to God's input and instruction. He gives us clear instruction through this letter to the Thessalonian's how to live until He returns. So this leads us to our 4<sup>th</sup> concept of happiness.

**4. I'll be happy when I learn to walk in the Freedom of the Power of God!**

The joy that we are talking about, that the scripture here in Thessalonians is declaring is much more deeper and spiritual. It is a whole different form of thinking, rather than thinking that the next thing will bring you your

greatest joy, or training your mind to operate on positive vibes only, or voiding your mind of entertaining any wants, desires, dreams or hopes at all. There is another way to think, and it comes from understanding the simple gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, himself, confesses that he could do nothing, unable to heal, to deliver the tormented by demons or to know the condition of the broken hearted without a submitted will to the Father God.

*"By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."*

John 5:30

The Greek word for nothing means "NOTHING." Jesus had no supernatural capabilities outside the power of God. When Jesus came to this earth He chose to live with the same limitations that man would face on this earth. Jesus performed miracles, wonders, and signs, as a man in right relationship to God...not as God!

If Jesus lived a sinless life and performed all these miraculous manifestations because He was God, then these would be unattainable for us. But if He did them as a man, under the power of God, then we are capable, even responsible to pursue His lifestyle through us.

A couple of things about Christ that were distinctively clear:

1. He had no sin to separate Him from the Father.
2. He was completely dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit.

What are the issues of our life that is distinctively clear?

1. We are sinners cleansed by Jesus' blood through His sacrifice on the cross. That is done...what's left?
2. How to depend on the Holy Spirit's power and guidance in our lives so that we might be able to live it up!

### **The Core: God's Original Commission**

The core of this understanding is found in God's Original Commission to man. It takes place in Genesis, in the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve were **placed with a mission**:

*"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"*

Genesis 1:28

But it was not a perfect environment, Satan, who had rebelled and cast out of heaven, along with one third of heaven's angels. Their new domain was this earth. It was man's commission to take dominion over the earth, it was under the influence of darkness. The Garden happened to be the first place where the heavenly dominion had to take place.

Honestly, Satan could have been destroyed and subdued by one word from God, but He didn't...why? Because He chose to defeat darkness through His delegated authority.

***“The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man.”***  
**Psalm 115:16**

See, our delegated command in the very beginning of time was that man was sent to be ambassadors to this earth.

***“We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.”***  
**II Corinthians 5:20**

In this passage, Paul is reflecting on his calling of an apostle. And as he does, he is revealing to us that what God could easily do Himself, He chooses to use man for His purposes.

**Ambassador-** An ambassador is the highest ranking diplomat who represents his native country to a foreign land. The president of the United States will appoint an individual to become an ambassador to another country. That person will live in another country and work in an embassy, representing the interest and policies of the United States.

See, **an ambassador is both a messenger and a representative.** There is nothing that he does for self promotion and doesn't speak in his own name. He doesn't even act on his own authority. He never forces his own opinions or demands but simply acts on what he has been told or commissioned to say. We are ambassadors with a mission, to defeat the “Prince of this world” and take back the dominion lost to him.

Satan didn't come into the Garden of Eden violently and take possession of Adam and Eve. He couldn't and here is why, because he didn't have the dominion to do so. Adam and Eve had dominion though. It was given to them from God. God delegated His authority over to them, to represent Him as an ambassador.

Man was given the keys of dominion over the whole planet and Satan's plan was to steal that authority from them. And he did exactly that when they ate the forbidden fruit, they simply yielded over to the temptation to oppose God and thus empowering Satan. **It is through this dominion that Satan can Steal, Kill and destroy.** (John 10:10)

We have to realize this very point if we are to walk in the joy of the Lord, Satan is empowered because man's failure in the garden was a transfer of empowerment of dominion. Man's failure became Satan's empowerment. His authority to rule was relinquished when Adam ate the forbidden fruit and in that one act mankind became the slave and property of the evil one. Paul tells us,

***“Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to***

***sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?"***

**Romans 6:16**

But God had a plan. He had predetermined a redemptive plan for mankind, (Genesis 3:15). **Jesus would come and reclaim all that was lost.** Mankind was lost and his authority over all dominion was lost. Jesus came to recapture both!

- Luke 19:10- Jesus came...*"to seek and to save that which was lost."*
- Luke 4:6-7- Jesus was on a 40-day fast. Satan knew Jesus was here on this earth to reclaim the authority and dominion that man had given away.

***"And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.'"***

**Luke 4:6-7**

Notice , *"...for it has been give to me..."* Satan didn't have the power to take it, it was given to him, relinquished when Adam abandoned God's plan for him when He ate the forbidden fruit.

Satan's attempt was to get Jesus to buy into the short cut plan. Jesus wouldn't have to go to the cross, He could by-pass raising up all those apostles, all the ridicule, all the suffering if He would just bow down and worship Satan. If Satan didn't have the dominion he really couldn't offer it to Jesus and Jesus would have called him an idiot and walked away, but He didn't. In short, Jesus said, "NO!"

God's plan was that His delegated authority in man would over come Satan and defeat him. God's plan was that someone, made in God's image, would empty himself of His rights and desires, submits to an Ambassador's role in this life and therefore acquires the right to defeat and put limitations on Satan.

Jesus came to retrieve, regain what had been lost, what man had given away. Jesus' own declaration says it best,

***"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."***

**Matthew 28:18b**

Jesus was declaring that He had got it all back, so go, take hold of what has been restored and reclaim this world and mankind with it!

***"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be [b] loosed in heaven."***

**Matthew 16:19**

Jesus wants us to fully realize what He has done for us...for this world. He re-delegated to us the power lost. We have been restored to completely to His plan of ruling as a people made in His image.

**Unger's Bible Dictionary-** “The power of the keys consisted not only in the supervision of the royal chambers, but also in deciding who was and who was not to be received into the King's service.”

*“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”*  
**Romans 16:20**

You and I were born to rule over this creation, over darkness, over attack, over hopelessness. Wherever we go, we are to take dominion because Jesus gave us the victory!

**KINGDOM-** King's Domain! God's plan was to delegate His authority through man to take dominion over this world. Since the infiltration of Satan's lies, evil darkness, disease, sickness, afflicting spirits, poverty, demonic influence, strife and division has ruled in the lives of people. But Christ came and exposed Satan's work and reconnected us with His Father which is now our Father and I am empowered, equipped to respond in this dark world with God's authority and dominion.

**DELIVER US FROM EVIL-** When Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray in Matthew 6, He told them, “**Deliver us from evil...**” (Matthew 6:13). The word “evil,” **pronos**, (GK), mean's **pain**. The root word is **penes**, meaning **poor**. There is a work that Christ does on the cross, a work that restores, even man's body and economic strife! Look what Jesus tells His disciples,

*“I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.”*  
**Luke 10:19**

Jesus Christ had come to give back the authority to those who have realigned themselves with the heavenly Father. Through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we can confidently enter into His royal throne room and make request of the King, to expand His Kingdom and save the Kingdom. **But WE ACTUALLY CONTROL WHO CONTROLS THE KINGDOM! GOD HAS DONE ALL HE WILL DO, HE WILL ONLY WORK THROUGH DELEGATED AUTHORITY!**

In light of the return of Christ and the Day of the Lord, many people see that this earth and the Church will aggressively get worse and worse, and that this will only be a sign of the last days. In a sick way the idea is that the weak and fragile church confirms that we are actually on the right track and all is well!? There are scriptures that show that the church will be faced with many challenges as His appearing draws nearer. But this divine purpose of God never ends. There is a call to act in courage, faith and take action, because the Church still has and is responsible for taking dominion on this earth and make an impact on this earth before Jesus comes back. To give up and be hauled into heaven like one of these government incentives is not a victory, God has bigger plans than that.

*"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us..."*

Ephesians 3:20

Listen! The same one who called the "**fearful**" **Gideon**, hiding from the enemy, a "**Valiant Warrior**" and the "**unstable**" **Peter** a **Rock** has called you and I to be the **Body of Jesus Christ**. We may not feel like we are capable or worthy. We may not feel like we have enough theology or faith. We may not feel like we even belong. But Jesus provided a way! Through His death you are a Son and Daughter of God. You have been liberated of your sins! You have been restored in the eyes of God to the position of Adam and Eve before they partook of the fruit! You are no one in this world's eyes when you come to fully understand this. But you were no one to God other than a lost soul, bound and without hope. But **He sent you His Son, restored your soul, and He is in the process of renewing your mind. What does that mean? He is giving you an understanding of who you are in Christ.** You are understanding what it means to take dominion in this world. You are understanding that you are a counter part to the healing and restoration of many, many, many people who don't know they are without Jesus and without power in their lives to overcome Satan! You have not only been displayed the Grace of God for your forgiveness, you have been invested in to take dominion.

One of the first scriptures I ever memorize when I was young was Colossians 3:1-4. I meditated on it often. I didn't know why I was drawn to this scripture but it seemed to hold a truth for me.

*"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."*

Colossians 3:1-4

1. **I'll be happy all the time when...**
2. **I'll be happy all the time because I choose to do so.**
3. **I'll be happy when I don't care about anything.**
4. **I'll be happy when I learn to walk in the Freedom of the Power of God!**

### **Joy Verses Happiness**

Joy is much deeper than happiness. It is unrelated to the circumstances of this life, but is connected with our relationship with God. It is understanding what Christ has done for us and how we fit into that plan. And more than that, it is what we do with that knowledge and revelation. The Joy of the Lord is knowing "Whose Your Daddy!" When you develop a deep-seated confidence in God's love, power, and His work in our lives your Christian roots extend down into a rich soil of relationship with God.

You can't constantly be looking at your life's circumstances and then reacting, joy is not an expression based upon your surroundings, it is an expression

based upon who is in charge, who has all power, who will be there in the end.

Many people would consider the key to their joy would look at things here on this earth, their kids, their family, good money, great job, the perfect marriage. But this is not the focal point to true joy in our life. These are ever changing and without realizing it we can slip back and become dependent on all these things to supply our need for joy and all we become are saddened and stressed.

**Stress-** Unmet expectations! Many people are not living in the JOY of the Lord because their expectations of what should be happening here on this earth is robbing them of who God is in their life. We look at what we can do or what someone else can do that would produce joy in our lives and when those people don't perform just right or the situations don't play out just right we spiral down into frustration, fear, anger, rage, panic, stress, hopelessness and a variety other emotions and thoughts. When your joy is someone or something other than God disappointment and sadness will always be your closet friends.

### **The Second Biblical Way To Respond To God**

1. **BE JOYFUL ALWAYS (v. 16).**
2. **PRAY WITHOUT CEASING (v. 17).**

Now that you understand completely who you are and what your mission is here on this earth, your prayer is not for self preservation or survival, it is for darkness to be overcome and victory to me made manifest! This isn't about having a habit of prayer. This is about having a habit of winning and conquering in this life assisted by a continual process of prayer.

**When I pray I am requesting and receiving.** I am speaking things that should be and I am receiving understanding of what should be. Prayer is not a humble act, recognizing God's sovereignty and like a village tribesman who may lay down his offering before a volcanic God, or an obedient servant who may want to reason with the spirits and provide some sort of offering. Prayer is not a response of lack of relationship or fear of a relationship. Prayer is an acknowledgement of a relationship.

Why I pray without ceasing is because I have continual relationship with my God. I am never out of reach. He doesn't drop my calls. I have 100% reception with God. (1 Thess. 3:10; 2 Thess. 1:11; see also Eph. 1:16; 3:14).

### **The Third Biblical Way To Respond To God**

1. **BE JOYFUL ALWAYS (v. 16).**
2. **PRAY WITHOUT CEASING (v. 17).**
3. **BE THANKFUL FOR EVERYTHING (v. 18).**

Paul tells us to move ahead by learning to give thanks in all circumstances. We move from responding to all our circumstances, to focusing on who we are in Christ despite our circumstances, working over our circumstances and now we move into that third Biblical way to respond to God and be thankful for every circumstance.

Please understand that Paul is not saying we should give thanks FOR all circumstances. Obviously we should not be thankful for injustice, for tragedy, for disease, or for war. None of these things are good. However, we are to be grateful IN every circumstance. This is an important distinction. Like joy, our thankfulness is anchored to our relationship in Christ rather than to the circumstances of life.

## II. **Biblical Ways God Responds To Us**

**<sup>19</sup>Do not put out the Spirit's fire; <sup>20</sup>do not treat prophecies with contempt. <sup>21</sup>Test everything. Hold on to the good. <sup>22</sup>Avoid every kind of evil."**

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

### A. **DO NOT PUT OUT THE SPIRIT'S FIRE** (v. 19). [1. **THE SPIRIT'S FIRE**]

We are to allow the Spirit of God to create a fire within us and there are obviously things that causes that fire to go out. Paul's statement here is, "Do not put out..." in other words, you can put out the fire, it doesn't just go away. **We can certainly do this by holding active sin in our lives. But we can also do so by refusing to allow the Spirit the freedom to work.**

"Extinguish" is *sbennumi*, "put out (a fire), quench, extinguish." In its other occurrences in the New Testament it refers to fire (Matt. 12:20; 25:8; Heb. 11:34, or metaphorically, Mark 9:48; Eph. 6:16). **This is a warning against hindering the work, ministry, and gifts of the Spirit who, because of His enlightening, empowering, cleansing—and ministry of warming the hearts of His people—is sometimes likened to fire in Scripture** (Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:3, 4, and see also 2 Tim. 1:6).

### B. **DO NOT TREAT PROPHECIES WITH CONTEMPT** (v. 20). [2. **PROPHECIES**]

The gift of prophecy is the ability to receive and communicate direct revelations from God before the New Testament was completed (1 Cor. 13:8). Sometimes these revelations concerned future events (Acts 11:28), but often they dealt with the present (Acts 13:2). Perhaps people who had not received prophetic revelations were teaching their own views of such things, with the result that prophetic revelations tended to be evaluated on superficial terms (e.g., the eloquence of the speaker) instead of on the basis of their intrinsic authority.

In view of prophecies, some in the church may have been resisting the gift of prophecy, and perhaps other manifestations of the Spirit as well. As a result, some of the leadership, being more cautious and conservative, may have overreacted and prohibited the ministry of the Spirit. In Corinth, a very different scenario occurred. There, the gift of prophecy was being ignored because of an overzealous emphasis on the showy gifts like speaking in tongues (see 1 Corinthians 12-14).

"Do not treat ... with contempt" is the Greek *exoutheneo*, (1) "to set at naught, disdain, **despise**," (2) "reject or treat with contempt." "Prophecies" is *propheteia*, which can mean: (1) prophetic activity (Rev. 11:6), (2) the gift of prophecy, prophesying (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 13:2, 8; 14:22), or (3) the utterance of the prophet, the prophetic word, the content of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:6; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 1:18; Rev. 22:7, 10, 18). In this text the noun is plural and clearly refers to utterances or messages of the

many prophets that may have been in the church at Thessalonica.

**C. TEST ALL THINGS** (vv. 21-22). [3. TEST EVERYTHING]

“Examine” is *dokimazo*, “to put to the test, examine,” and then, based on the result of the test, “to accept as approved, approve.” Here is a warning against gullibility and a call for biblical discernment. Those brothers in Berea (Acts 17:11), leads us in testing all things by utilizing the Word of God itself. For these early believers this included the Old Testament and the traditions handed down by the apostles (see 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6).

Wherever God sets up a church, the devil sets up a chapel nearby. Hence, many false prophets arise. The church was not to respond to this by dismissing all prophecies out of hand. Rather, they were to discern (see Acts 17:10-11). All things - not just prophecies - were to be put to the test and discerned. And in doing so they were to hold fast to what is good and abstain from every form of evil.

Apparently, however, certain “idle” brothers (v. 14; cf. 4:11, 12) had misused this gift by falsifying data regarding the Lord’s return. This had soured the remainder of the flock against prophecy in general. Their tendency now was not to listen to any more prophetic messages, but to discount them in view of counterfeit utterances they had heard. Once again Paul warns against overreaction and urges the church to give prophecies their proper place in edifying its members (cf. v. 11). 165, 166

**D) Hold on to the good.** [4. GRAB HOLD OF GOOD]

Obviously, then, once what is heard is discovered to be “the good,” i.e., true and in accord with the revelation of God in Christ, we are to tenaciously hold on to it, for God’s revelation alone is a sure foundation and an anchor of the soul. “Hold fast” (katecho), as used in this context, means “to hold fast to in the sense of retain and guard.” The very nature of this word calls our attention to the fact this will not be easy. Satan and the world will constantly seek to undermine the truth and teaching of Scripture (see Jude 3). “Good” is *kalos*, which carries the idea of valuable, profitable, useful and describes the inherent value and profit of the Word (see 2 Tim. 3:16-17). We should also note that it is the Word that enables us to discern what is truly good and valuable in matters not only of doctrinal and moral right, but also in practice (see Heb. 5:13-14).

**E) Avoid every kind of evil.** [5. AVOID EVIL]

Eph. 5:10-12 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

Here is one of those verses that has not only been wrenched out of its context, but twisted by many, due in part to the translation of the KJV, “Abstain from every appearance of evil.” This suggests the idea that we should avoid what even appears to be evil, though it may not in reality be evil. This command must not be wrested from its context. It comes as an antithesis and a means of strengthening the preceding, “hold on to the good.” Rather than simply, “stay away from the evil,” we have “stay away from every form of evil.” The contrast is not between what is really good and what only appears as evil, but what is in reality evil as a result of the testing.

The word “appearance” is *eidos*, “appearance, form, kind.”

Thus, believers must examine everything carefully and avoid that which does not conform to the truth. There will be many professed spiritual manifestations that do not contribute but rather detract from the development of spiritual growth and progress in the faith.

***“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”***

**I Thessalonians 5:23-24**

F) God will **sanctify** you through and through

G) Allow God to to be kept blameless in your **spirit, soul and body**.

H) You can **count** on God!

- ***God will sanctify you through and through...***
- ***Your whole spirit, soul and body can be kept blameless***
- ***The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it!***

***“Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”***

**I Thessalonians 5:25-28**