

November 9/10, 2024

"Breaking Away"

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SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

November: Read Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

Day 1 [1 Thessalonians 4:1-8](#) | Breaking Away

As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. [1 Thessalonians 4:1-2](#)

The apostle Paul, writing to the new believers in Thessalonica, spends the first part of the letter reminding them of important truths. He reminds them of who they are in Christ and who they are to him. He writes to make sure their new faith stands firm against the pressures of their culture. He reminds them that living to please God means living differently from the world around them. In this part of the letter, Paul gets personal as he describes how following Jesus impacts their sexuality as both individuals and a church community. They are to be distinct from the culture and to call out wrong and destructive things. But they are also to remain hospitable and grace-filled.

Paul's words are just as important for us today. Many of the ideas about sexuality in our culture aren't too different from the first century. Both cultures can be described as extremely sexualized. Both need rescuing. The hope the church in Thessalonica offered is the same hope we bring to our world. It's Jesus's way of living, and it affects every area of our lives, including sexuality. Jesus's way of life demonstrates that God has our best interest in mind, both individually and as a church community.

TODAY: Pray for openness to what God desires to say to you this week. Pray for him to bring you whatever you need in this part of your life: healing, hope or conviction.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezra 1-2](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note God's faithfulness in fulfilling the prophecy that his people would return to the land. Think about how Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies ([Matthew 5:17](#)).

Day 2 [1 Thessalonians 3:6-13](#) | A Loving Relationship

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. [1 Thessalonians 3:12](#)

Before Paul reminds them of God's instructions about sexuality, he spends three chapters reminding them of his love for them, who they are in Christ and what their new faith means. Just before he gets to the important teaching about how they are to live sexually, Paul prays. He prays for love to abound and overflow and for their hearts to be strengthened to live holy lives. This shows that Paul is no moralist, just looking to put a crimp in their lifestyle. He is their friend, and he is for them. His teaching comes from affection and a desire to see them live well. It's also a conversation they've had before. Because sexuality is an important topic, it's one he's touching on again.

This illustrates the importance for us to have deep spiritual relationships where we are for each other and can speak into each other's lives. It can be a spiritual friendship, a small group, or within a family as parents or grandparents. In these loving relationships, we are called to encourage each other to live out God's best and to warn against sin. It's a call for community; to be honest, authentic and vulnerable in trusted spaces. We must be open to correction and for each other. These are relationships in which we need to invest.

TODAY: How do your relationships need to be strengthened? Do you need more relationships that encourage your walk with Jesus? If you need a small group, join one today [here](#). If you are in a group, how can you be more authentic and vulnerable?

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Ezra 3-4. Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Look for the rebuilding of the temple. Consider how Jesus becomes the new temple of God's presence (John 2:19-21).

Day 3 [1Thessalonians 4:3-5](#) | Counterculture

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

The culture in Thessalonica is saturated with sexual immorality. Pagan temples are prominent locations of immorality, and the prevalence of slavery means that even children are regular victims. It was almost as if "anything goes" regarding sexuality. Paul seems to assume the new believers were engaged in these sinful practices before coming to faith in Jesus. It was their primary culture. But Paul reminds them that they are to be set apart and look different from their culture. He tells them to control their bodies in a way that is holy and honorable. The difference is self-control through the Holy Spirit.

Our world today invites us to follow our passions. We are invited to engage in sexual immorality with "Follow your heart," "You be you," and "You only live once." But we can heed God's call to avoid immoral behavior by deleting certain apps or contacts from our phones that may tempt us in a way we shouldn't be tempted. We can do this by choosing not to flirt in the office. It may also mean taking the difficult step to admit a porn addiction and seek help. We can live set apart from our culture with God's help. We are commanded to reflect the image of God and to value others as made in his image.

TODAY: Identify where you are at risk of, or even coming close to, sexual immorality. Confess this to God, rest in his forgiveness and rely on the strength of the Spirit to live according to God's design. "Father, I confess I struggle with _____. Please forgive me and help me by your Spirit live your way. Amen."

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read Ezra 5-6. Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Pay attention to the opposition faced in rebuilding. Reflect on how Jesus faced opposition in his ministry ([John 15:18](#)).

Day 4 [1Thessalonians 4:6-8](#) | Church Family

And that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. 1 Thessalonians 4:6

Even in a challenging discussion about purity and sexuality, Paul calls these believers to a high standard. As believers in Jesus, they are part of God's family. Their relationships with each other are to look different now. Paul tells them to treat each other as brothers and sisters. Their community must look different than the culture around them. This means instead of looking at someone for what they can do for you, they look at them as a brother or sister in Christ. When people look at their church, they should see a different level of care, honor and respect than what they otherwise experience.

People today should see the same thing when they look at us. As followers of Jesus, we are to treat each other as family. When someone who is hurting and looking for hope interacts with our church community, they should find something different than what they experience elsewhere. Are we different, or are we as messed up as the world they are trying to flee? We should open our doors to those who need hope, welcoming them without endorsing destructive behavior. We are to love them as we share God's best for them through the gospel. Jesus offers forgiveness, rescue and a new way to live. Our behavior either opens or closes the door to this message.

TODAY: Watch as Ada Bible Worship sings, "[How Deep the Father's Love for Us](#)." Use the lyrics as the basis for a prayer of gratitude for the love Jesus offers that allows us to live well with each other as a witness to the world.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezra 7-8](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Observe Ezra's devotion to God's Word. Think about how Jesus is the living Word of God ([John 1:1,14](#)).

Day 5 [1 Corinthians 6:18-20](#) | God's Temple

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Paul calls the Thessalonians to reject all forms of sexual immorality. He says rejecting this instruction is rejecting God, who gave them the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:8). Paul teaches something similar when he writes to Jesus followers in Corinth and tells them to "flee from sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). The Greek word Paul uses for sexual sin is the broadest term he could have used. This means believers are to flee any form of sexual activity outside of a marriage between one man and one woman. He does this because their bodies have become walking and talking temples of the living God. The Holy Spirit lives in followers of Jesus, beginning the moment they believe. They are to live holy lives because the holy God is living in them.

The same is true for us today. As believers, the same Spirit who lived in them lives in us. How we treat and use our bodies matters. How we behave sexually is not just a physical issue. It is also a spiritual issue that God takes seriously. Through God's Spirit, we can live holy lives.

TODAY: Consider how you need to flee sexual immorality or remember that you are a temple of the living God. Write your response in a journal. If you need help understanding the important truth of the indwelling of the Spirit, contact us at btw@adabible.org. We'd love to connect with you.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezra 9-10](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Focus on the call to holiness and separation from sin. Consider how Jesus calls us to holiness while offering forgiveness ([1 Peter 1:15-16](#)).