



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N23 June 4, 2023

NOT HOME YET

"A Holy Kiss"

1 Thessalonians 5:25-28

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Love

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us."

1 John 4:10-12



How do people know that you know them?

Have you ever felt invisible? Have you ever been at an event where you know the host but no one else there? Those gathered seem to know each other but know nothing about you. Awkward! Your host is making everyone feel welcome but has little time for you. Private stories and inside jokes go over your head. If you are an extrovert, you feel silenced. If you are an introvert, you fight the urge to bolt. You don't want to stand in a silent corner but you also don't want to stumble through contrived conversations. I was recently in such an awkward situation when far from home. I knew one other person at the gathering and he was preoccupied with much administration. I spoke a different language. I dressed differently. I did not share any vocational similarities with those gathered. I did introduce myself to a few people, but quickly learned that each cluster of people knew each other already and were easily chatting. I tried to be a good listener, but felt all alone. You can only stir the ice in your drink for so long.

This awkwardness continued until another guest approached me. This person shook my hand and asked me my name and where I was from. This person immediately smiled and showed appreciation for where I was from and was impressed at how far I had travelled. I was asked about my family, my work and what I thought of the local surroundings. I was invited to sit down with this person to talk. This person was genuinely interested in me and wanted to know my story. The program for the evening was about to begin and my new friend excused themselves. To my surprise, this person was one of the main speakers for the evening. I was so impressed that a person of this stature would take time to make me feel welcome and "seen." I personally experienced that *acknowledgement* is an *antidote to invisibility*.

We are called to "sacrificially and unconditionally love others" [Core Competency - "Love"]. Love can be expressed in many different ways. Consider the idea of love as "acknowledgment." Look around you. Are there people unknown and different from you?

What would it look like for you to "sacrifice" your own comfort and "acknowledge" a stranger? Ask the person their name and where they are from. Invite them to sit with you. Share with them what you love locally and find out what they love. Making friends and sharing simple hospitality is a wonderful expression of Christian love. Romans 12:13 states, "Practice hospitality." The Greek word for this practice is "*philoxenos*," which means "love of strangers." Helping a stranger feel welcome is an act of love. Making someone feel appreciated can be a priceless gift, especially to someone feeling invisible.

Even though our world has expanding arenas of social media, people feel more isolated and alone. Our phones, news feeds and streaming channels can become sinkholes. Social contagions like abuse, false accusation, scams, and the threat of litigation can drive many into seclusion. If we are not enticed by our devices to isolate, we may fear that getting involved with others may trap us with shame. The gift of hospitality as an act of love may be the harvest field for which the church has long been praying.

Faith in Jesus can also result in loneliness. The marketplace, the playground and the boardroom can quickly show you the door if your faith becomes too obvious. Christians need to be seen and known by other Christians, lest we think that all are against us. "Body aversion" happens in the church when believers congregate and ignore those different from themselves. How do we greet each other in our gatherings? How well do we make people feel welcome when they worship with us, study with us or pray with us? "Greeting one another" in Christ is not a mere convention. Making people feel known and loved is serious business. We should be courteous and thoughtful in our greetings, working hard to not make anyone feel uncomfortable. But we should not shy away from letting people know that they are seen and loved, especially those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's make it our mission to stamp out invisibility in our midst. Love others well with affectionate acknowledgement.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:25-28

25 Brothers and sisters, pray for us. 26 Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. 27 I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
(NIV)

Read in other translations

25 Brothers and sisters, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. 27 I put you under oath by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

28 May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
(NASB)

25 Brothers and sisters, pray for us too. 26 Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. 27 I call on you solemnly in the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. (NET)

25-27 Friends, keep up your prayers for us. Greet all the followers of Jesus there with a holy embrace. And make sure this letter gets read to all the brothers and sisters. Don't leave anyone out.

28 The amazing grace of Jesus Christ be with you!
(The Message)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle each use of words referencing people in this passage.
- Underline each reference to God in this passage.
- Place a box around each use of the word "all" in this passage.
- Double underline the phrase that clearly identifies Paul in v. 27.
- Place brackets around the source of the grace Paul wishes upon the Thessalonians.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What group of people is referenced repeatedly in each verse of 1 Thess. 5:25-28 and what does this repetition suggest?
2. How is Paul's mention of prayer in 1 Thess. 5:25 different from his other mentions of prayer in the book of 1 Thessalonians?
3. What do you think Paul was trying to communicate when he directed the Thessalonians to "Greet" each other?
4. Why did Paul include "all" in 1 Thess. 5:26-27 as he commanded "greeting" and "reading"?
5. What does a "holy kiss" add to greetings of fellow believers?
6. How would you see 1 Thess. 5:26 working out for followers of Jesus in our day of frequent scandal and abuse?
7. Why do you think Paul expressed so forcefully his command to have his letter read to all the followers of Jesus in Thessalonica?
8. Is the public reading of the Bible important for today or is it a practice no longer needed? Why?
9. What does grace connected to Jesus Christ suggest about him (consider 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:9)?
10. How would you apply 1 Thess. 5:25-28 to your life as a follower of Jesus Christ?

Commentary On The Text

Last words are often the most poignant part of a conversation. Last pages of a novel often resolve the story. The mystery is often solved, the romance is often realized, the punch line of a long joke often comes right at the end. Paul's final lines are not "throwaways." Each short command of Paul packs a punch.

We should note how Paul repeated the phrase "Adelphois" [translated "Brothers and Sisters" and "God's people" – NIV] in each verse of 1 Thess. 5:25-27. The "you" of 1 Thess. 5:28 echoes this familial sentiment. Faith in Jesus produces a new family. The embrace of this "new family" is essential for vibrant faith. Love has no place to be practiced if it is not within the bounds of the new family of faith. The corporate tones of 1 Thess. 5:11-24 reach their fitting climax in Paul's charges to his "brothers and sisters" in 1 Thess. 5:25-28.

Paul's first closing charge is a request that the Thessalonians partner with him in prayer (1 Thess. 5:25). Prayer was indispensable to Paul. Prayer for Paul was not just a private discipline. Pauline prayer was also a shared confession of dependence. "He mentions them continually in his prayers, he says (1:2). He prays both for the overflowing of their love and for the strengthening of their hearts in holiness (3:12-13). And he prays for their complete sanctification (23). Now he asks them to pray for him. It is a touching example of his personal humility and of the reciprocity of Christian fellowship" (John R. Stott, *The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians: The Gospel & the End of Time, The Bible Speaks Today*, 134). We all know we need to pray more, but how often do we ask others to pray for us?

Next, Paul commanded that greetings be exchanged "for all the brothers [and sisters]" or "all God's people" [NIV]. It is possible that Paul was simply expressing his personal affection for those he had met in Thessalonica. "Because I cannot be there, greet, for me, all who are there..." could be what Paul desired to express. But, because this command "to greet" is sandwiched between calls to corporate prayer and public readings, and because of the inclusion of the word "all" in the description of those to be greeted, many think that the command to greet was more than simply an expression of Paul's personal sentiments. Paul here is commanding a practice of affectionate familial recognition among those in the new family of faith.

The adding of a "holy kiss" to the command of greeting further heightened the intensity of the charge. "Paul encourages other churches to greet one another with a holy kiss, usually in connection with exhortations about being at peace with one another (Rom 16:16-20; 2 Cor 13:11-12; see also 1 Pet 5:14). The close link between the two suggests that a holy kiss is a symbolic expression of a condition of peace among people. Klassen proposes that Paul repeatedly encourages Christians to kiss to underscore that former antagonistic barriers of gender, race (Jew and Gentile) and social rank (slave and free) have been broken down by Christ's work and to express

a new unity in Christ. Moreover, since kissing in the Greco-Roman world was a sign of close familial relationship or, at times, reconciliation between antagonists, it indicated for Paul that all diverse people-groups in Christ are part of a newly constituted spiritual family" (G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 177).

The early church incorporated a "holy kiss of forgiveness" between believers before communion. Later church leaders set boundaries for "the kiss" to be placed only on the cheeks or forehead. The "holy kiss" was to be shared only with the same gender. While many today stumble with the awkwardness of "kissing," Paul's more important imperative was to "greet ALL the brothers and sisters." This "greeting" of "all" celebrated the revolutionary grace that encouraged people from all walks of life to overcome prejudice and animosity between generational enemies. "Paul's command to greet others 'with a holy kiss,' therefore, expresses more than an exhortation simply to greet each other. It serves, rather, as a challenge to his readers to remove any hostility that may exist among them and to exhibit the oneness that they share as fellow members of the body of Christ" (Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1-2 Thessalonians*, 426).

Paul moved from a warm tone of affection to a forceful charge when he commanded that his letter be read among all (1 Thess. 5:27). "The reason for such a strong exhortation is most likely found in the tensions that existed between certain members of the congregation (4:6; 5:13-14, 20), especially between the majority of the believers and the disorderly among them (4:3-8 and 5:14). Paul understood the necessity of gathering together 'all the brothers and sisters' of the city to hear the message of this letter, and this included the members who had crossed Christian moral bounds. In this gathering not even the illiterate among them would be excluded from the encouragement, instruction, and correction contained in this letter, while at the same time this collective hearing would underline the community's solidarity" (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 272). The public reading of Paul's letters would also have elevated them to a place of canonical authority (2 Peter 3:14-16). Those not possessing a Bible may have had no other access to Scripture than from its public readings.

Finally, Paul wished grace upon all in Thessalonica. "The apostle does not simply wish strength or prosperity on the readers but rather invokes a blessing on them for what they needed most: the grace that comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. This letter began with this desire for grace, plus that for peace (1:1), and here, as there, it summarizes the essence of the faith the Thessalonians have received. The person of Jesus, the Lord and Christ, is the fountain from which the grace of God flows out to them. This benediction is far from being a formality tacked to the end of the letter. The blessing of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ embraces the fullness of the salvation that comes from the one who is the sole Sovereign and Savior" (Green, 272).

Word Studies/Notes

v.25 **Brothers and sisters** “With his final vocative ‘brothers and sisters’ (number 14) in this letter, Paul, who has just prayed for them, asks the Thessalonian believers to reciprocate in this matter. Indeed, so obvious is this that early scribes added a *kai* (‘even, also’), so that the later text reads: ‘Brothers and sisters, pray also for us.’ While one should probably not make too much of a unique moment like this, at least two matters might be suggested by it. First, without necessarily trying to do so, Paul here reflects the friendship motif we have noted throughout. Asking them to pray for him and his companions is a way of expressing mutual indebtedness between friends. Second, it may also indicate something about Paul’s own present situation in Corinth, where his relationship with that community of believers turned out to be not nearly at the same level of comradeship as those between him and his Macedonian churches” (Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 232).

v. 25 **pray** “Even as Paul on more than one occasion in the letter prayed for the Thessalonians (cf. 1:2–3; 3:10; 5:23), so he in turn requests (in 5:25) their prayers for him and his companions (cf. 2 Thess. 3:1–2; also Rom. 15:30–32; 2 Cor. 1:11; Col. 4:3–4). Despite the difference in spiritual maturity between Paul, Silas, and Timothy, on the one hand, and the Thessalonians on the other, Paul implicitly acknowledges, by his request for prayer, their fundamental equality before God” (Michael Holmes, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, The NIV Application Commentary, 201).

v. 26 **Greet** “The direction that ‘all the brothers’ (and sisters) should share in this greeting may be intentionally emphatic (more emphatic than the ἀλλήλους of Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12); if there were tensions within the church—tensions (say) between the Gentile and Jewish members—these might be resolved by the “holy kiss,” from which none was to be excluded. There is no implication that the direction is addressed to the προϊστάμενοι [“those over you,” v 12], who were to kiss the rank and file as a token that the peace called for in v 13 was now restored, any more than it is addressed to the rank and file who were to include even the προϊστάμενοι in their greeting as a token of the unity between leaders and led” (F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Vol. 45, Word Biblical Commentary, 134).

v. 26 **all** “Paul is addressing all the members of the community; since this is a regular request in his letters (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12) it can hardly be taken as suggesting that some division within the

church needs to be healed. Yet if the Thessalonians were in any way disputing among themselves (e.g. over idleness) then this prescription ensures that none are left out of the greeting. In the ancient world greetings took many forms, both actions (embracing, kissing, bowing) and words” (Ernest Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, Black’s NT Commentary, 245).

v. 26 **holy kiss** “This was not a kiss of respect as was used in ancient times to honor men of authority. Neither was it cultic as though copied from an ancient mystery religion. It most closely parallels the use of a kiss among members of the same family as a token of their close relationship. Christians have come into the family of God, which knows even closer ties than those of any human family (Matt 12:46–50). It was quite appropriate that a symbolic greeting be adopted. It was to be “holy” (*hagio*), i.e., such as is becoming to saints (*hagiois*, 3:13). This may have been the custom of men kissing men and women kissing women so as to forestall any suspicion of impropriety. A Jewish synagogue practice, it could easily have found its way into early Christian assemblies” (Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, Vol. 11, 297).

v. 27 **read** “Obviously it was to be read aloud, in line with the classical meaning of *anaginōskō* (‘read’). Under restrictions of limited educational privilege, not all participants in Christian circles were able to read for themselves. The further limitation of insufficient copies and expense of writing materials prohibited distribution to all. The only solution was to give the Epistle a place in public worship alongside the OT Scripture” (Thomas, 297).

v. 26 **grace** “It is characteristic of Paul that he brings his letters to an end, not with the customary ‘Farewell,’ but with a prayer for grace for those to whom he has written. Occasionally the prayer is shorter than this one, and sometimes it is longer, the longest being 2 Corinthians 13:14 with its mention of each of the Persons of the Trinity. But characteristic in each case is the prayer for grace. It is the grace of the Lord that lingers in the apostle’s thoughts, just as it is the grace of the Lord with which he begins his letters. His own hand would seem to have penned these words in each epistle (see 2 Thess. 3:17 and note), for he took the pen from his amanuensis somewhere before the conclusion. Just where he did so in this letter is not apparent, though the use of the first person singular in verse 27 makes it appear that he wrote that verse himself” (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, The New International Commentary on the OT and NT, 188).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Make your experience of grace more than a private matter by praying, celebrating and enjoying God's Word with brothers and sisters in Christ.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

May is the month when all the end-of-year activities collide with all the beginning of summer activities, resulting in a thunderstorm of parties, celebrations, endless teacher gifts, preparatory shopping and tackling the summer to do list. At some point I'm sure I'll take a breath but right now I'm just getting through my day and honestly it feels stressful. I'm worried I'm forgetting something, dropping the ball or missing an important detail. I've had to remind myself of a few things and I want to share them with you. (1) This is God's grace. This season points us to the principle of daily surrender and living in the moment. Matthew 6:34 tells us to focus on today and let tomorrow worry about itself. (2) God gave me this day, so I should rejoice and be glad about it. Today isn't too hard; it's a blessing and joy (Psalm 118:24). (3) His mercies are new every day and sometimes every moment. I need to show myself and others God's grace (Lamentations 3:23). (4) This is a season; there is an end in sight. Ecclesiastes 3 reminds me that today isn't the rest of my life, it's just today. (4) God is faithful. He started a work in me and He is faithful to carry it on to completion (Phil 1:6). Paul's closing remarks take this thunderstorm of feelings and settle us with a soft and gentle rain of trust. Paul pleads for prayer as he reminds his friends to continue on in the grace God offers. Let's do the same. Let's lift each other up in prayer. Let's remind each other of His ridiculous grace.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:25-28.

1. What did Paul ask his brothers and sisters in Christ to do?
2. To whom did Paul want the letter read?
3. How did Paul begin and end this letter to the Thessalonians?

What Do You Think?

What do you learn about loving others from Paul's closing?

What Do You Do?

Who can you pray for today? Make a list of three different people, then spend a few minutes praying for them.

CORE COMPETENCY: Love

I love and forgive others no matter what.

MEMORY VERSE: Romans 8:28

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purposes."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME _____

GRADE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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