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Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

The title to our message today is “The Secret to Living Vibrant, Holy, Purposeful Lives.” If you saw that title on the internet, you might want to click on it with eager anticipation. You might think, *yeah*,

I want a vibrant life!

I desire to live a purposeful life.

But I’m not sure being holy is possible.

You might think of living a holy life as being “stuffy” or “limiting” or “self-righteous.” Or, you might say, “I don’t have a clue what it means to be holy!”

Let’s be honest. Paul’s words are counter cultural in 2017. But we do not want to miss out on what God means or on what blessing God has for us just because our culture gives relatively free reign in the area of sexuality. Perhaps if we explore Paul’s argument about sex, we can see a new value—the value of a holy life; and by investigating it and asking questions, we can receive the blessing of his message.

The adjectives, “vibrant, holy, and purposeful” are necessary ingredients for the good life, says Paul.

This church was made up of Jews and Gentiles whose lives and backgrounds involved two entirely different worldviews. They all became Christians. Both groups became believers in the Kingdom of God.

One group was familiar with sexual purity. The other was not. So let’s pretend we are part of the second group who is just learning about sexual purity. Let’s hear the reason for that belief.

Humans are physical beings. But we are also spiritual beings. Every person is made in God’s image. Whether you are a believer or not each one of you has imprinted on you the image of God. You are body, mind, and spirit.

Your spirit defines who you are; your core. Your spirit is influenced by the people around you, your family, your education, your experiences, and your commitments or lack thereof. Your spirit can be beat down, or, you might think too highly of yourself.

Your spirit lives in your physical body and your spiritual nature makes you *you*. All people, every human being has a God-given spirit. You are made up of much more than your physical body and physical needs.

The Christian has something in addition. The Christian is different from people who do not believe. The Christian has two spirits living within you. The Holy Spirit lives in you. So your body houses not only your own spirit but also the Spirit of God.

That makes you unique. That is what gives you a new identity. Your identity is “Child of God.”

You often hear people say, “I’m going to find myself.” The Christian does not have to do that. Your identity is Christ. You belong to Him.

This is a marvelous gift. This can be a great relief.

You do not have to figure life out or even figure out who you are. You belong to Christ. You don’t have to run your world. You can relax. You are not entirely in charge of things. You have Him! You have God. God has willingly given you directions. **God’s life in you leads to a vibrant, holy, purposeful life.**

Do you trust that?

Isn’t it great that you do not have to figure out by trial and error what makes life vibrant and purposeful? Isn’t it great to have a track record set out by the One who created you, put his image in you, and gave you the Spirit of Christ to live in you?

You do not have to go “find yourself” because your identity is in Him. Are you working on trusting God daily with your life? Or, are you searching in all the wrong places even though you are a Christian?

You do not have to go “looking for love” because you are loved so much God thought you were worth saving; he thought you were to die for, so that you can live a vibrant, holy, purposeful life.

To do that requires a new worldview. It requires a change of focus from our 2017 thinking and new way to conduct ourselves that will cause you to prosper more and more. That is holiness.

A young lady I met in seminary was looking for love in all the wrong places. She was practicing a lifestyle of going from man to man and they all seemed to end in the same way. It was killing her in body and spirit because we are both body and spirit. One night when she was with yet another man she hardly knew, she was so desperate she cried out to Jesus—what do I do? Help me! And clear as a bell she heard these words in her head: “Just get up.” It seemed so simple.

And she did. She lifted up her head and got up out of that bed. She got up and left. Jesus lifted her up and it healed her. She never went back to that old life because He loved her.

Do you need to get up and start new?

Paul says, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” (1 Cor 6:15-16)

Paul adds: “But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.” (v. 17)

Holiness is not about some sort of lifeless legalism. That creates an element of trying to be acceptable to God. You are already accepted by God.

You have to see it from the perspective that sexual sin is disordered and fragmented. The person involved in sexual sin is seeking here and there and everywhere trying to carve out satisfaction and love for yourself. It costs your body, and it costs your spirit when the relationship does not last. But when you take the other road—the road of abandoning everything for the Lord, putting Him as your first love, allowing His Spirit room to flourish in you—you are never left alone.

You find your first love in God.

It's not about keeping rules; it is about relationship. You abandon yourself to that permanent, vibrant, purposeful love and forsake the weak, disordered, fragmented substitute.

Instead, you want to please the one you LOVE and who LOVES YOU.

Why did Paul nose into this subject? Because half this congregation was pagan and was used to using their body for sexual indulgence, without respect for marriage. That was the cultural norm in A.D. 50 for people to feed their sexual passions, whether single or married.

But that pattern is hard on families and marriages. Paul said, "Give dignity to your body," and, "Don't mess with your neighbor's wife." He wanted them to live fully into the kingdom of God.

God's Spirit within you empowers this change. It's an in-the-body thing. Being a Christian takes place in your body. You are a physical being so be comfortable in your body. Take care of your body. It will be with you for a long time. It will be raised one day.

Hear Paul's words from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*:

Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can never "become one." . . . In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love. . . . Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high for? (1 Cor. 6:17-19)

Therefore honor God with your body. (v. 20) You will find the secret to experiencing a vibrant, holy, purposeful life.

AMEN