

# Living for Someone Else

## 1 Thessalonians 1:5

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Take your Bibles and open them to 1 Thessalonians 1. Today I want to talk to you about living for someone else. Moving you out of the spotlight and placing someone else there. Getting your focus off of you and onto someone else.

Let's begin by asking a basic question. Why is it so hard to live for someone else? There are several reasons, but let me give you two. This is not on the outline, so if you are taking notes you'll have to find a place for it. Why is it hard to live for someone else?

- **It goes against our sinful nature.** Galatians 5:20 list several acts of the sinful nature, one of them being "selfish ambition." It is difficult to give up our goals, our agendas, our comforts, our pleasures, our time, our money, and our success for someone else. Our old sinful nature tells us, "We are more important than they are and they should be living for me, not me for them." Living for someone else goes against our sinful nature. That's why you find it hard to serve your spouse at times. That why you find it inconvenient and irritating to help your parents around the house. That sinful nature is saying, "I want to be served, not serve."
- Another reason it is difficult to live for someone else is because **it requires humility.** Philippians 2:3-4 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (4) Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others." You should address your own needs, but at the same time don't become so self-

centered and full of vain conceit that you don't have time to help serve those in your life. It takes humility to consider your brother's need, your sister's need, your neighbor's need, the need of the person at work or school better than your own need. Pride says my need is greater and they should help me, but humility says, "I have needs too, but I can help them too."

We have seen a couple of reasons why it is difficult to live for someone else but let me answer another basic question: Why should you live for someone else?

- **When you live for someone else you are like Christ.** Jesus said He came to serve, not be served (Matt. 20:28). He lived, died, and arose again for you. When you decide to live for others, that's when you find true meaning in life.
- **When you live for someone else you have the greatest impact.** The moment you decide to focus on being a blessing more than receiving a blessing your level of impact just increased. When you make the shift from what can they do for me, to what can I do for them you position yourself to be a mighty instrument in the hands of God. It is a positional paradigm shift.

This brings us to the end of verse 5 which says, "You know how we lived among you for your sake." Before we get to deep into this, let me remind you of the context of this statement. Paul has just thanked God for them because of their salvation and being born again. He says he knows they have been chosen and saved by God because he has seen the evidence of their salvation through their work for the kingdom of God produced by their faith in Christ, their labor for the Lord prompted by their love for Jesus, and their endurance they have to stay faithful to God because of the hope they have in Christ. Then he adds to the proof of their salvation by saying how they received the message of Jesus Christ not simply as another speech or good idea, but with innate power that transformed them on the inside, with the presence of the Holy Spirit convincing and illuminating spiritual truth in their life, along with a deep conviction of Biblical truth that was driving their life. At this point Paul reminds them of how he, Silas, and Timothy conducted their life by saying at the end of verse 5, "You know how we lived among you for your sake." The reason he says this is because he is about to remind them of even more proof of their salvation because he saw how they, as new

believers, began to imitate him and the others in their Christian life and eventually imitated the Lord.

However, his statement, “You know how we lived among you for your sake,” contains at least four thoughts about how to live for someone else. Let’s take a look at those.

### **1. You are known by how you live (“You know”)**

**Number one, you are known by how you live.** Notice that Paul says, “You know how we lived among you for your sake.” Living for someone else involves your reputation.

- **The Principle Explained**

The word “know” means to learn from observation. The Thessalonians watched them live: how they reacted to problems, criticisms, persecutions, inconveniences, and danger. They observed how they reacted to difficult people and difficult situations. By watching their life they came to know what kind of men they were. They became known by how they lived. They began to develop a reputation, a name for themselves, and to build a particular standing among the people. Paul was aware that while he was with them he was building a reputation, a name, and a standing among the people that would either help or hinder the proof of God’s Word and His good news. He knew that he would be known by how he lived.

God’s Word talks about your reputation and how people perceive you. Let me give you some examples.

In 1 Timothy 3:7 we see one of the qualifications of an overseer in the church and it says, “He must also have a good reputation with outsiders.” Even though this is speaking about church leaders, this should be true of every believer. You and I should have a good reputation with those who are lost. Non-believers should know us as people of integrity, honesty, compassion, patience, self-control, and the like. You are to be known by how you live and your life should produce a good reputation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We are talking about the fact you are known by how you live. Your reputation, the name you build for yourself, and the standing you have with people is significant in the level of impact you will have on people regarding the kingdom of God.

- **The Principle Illustrated**

You are known by how you live. In Acts 6 there was a problem with meeting the needs of some widows in the church. But I want you to notice how they solved the problem and addressed the issue. Look at Acts 6:1, “In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. (2) So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. (3) Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.....’” They were to look for seven men who were “known” to be led by the Spirit and were wise (they had the ability to apply Biblical principles to everyday life). They had a reputation for being men who walked by the Spirit and could apply Biblical truth to life situations.

- **The Principle Applied**

If there was a problem that came up in your family, in your church, among your friends, at school, or at work and they needed someone who was marked by love, faithfulness, wisdom, and honesty would your name be mentioned as a candidate to help solve the problem? As a Christian, you are “known” by how you live. Paul knew the Thessalonians had a perception of him and that he had a reputation among the people. He knew that they had come to some conclusions about him by observing his life. You need to know that those who are in your life have come and are coming to some conclusions about you. By the decisions you make, the words you say, and the actions you do you are building a reputation that either honors God or dishonors Him. Living for someone else involves your reputation. You are known by how you live.

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Notice what Proverbs 3:3-4 says, “Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. (4) Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.” Wise people want to have a good name and reputation with others. God says, to do that, let love and faithfulness be a high priority in your life. No matter who you are dealing with treat them with love and show them complete faithfulness. Let’s look at one more. Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.” Again, God places a high value on having a good name and being esteemed by others. If it’s important to God then it should be important to us.

## 2. Choose how you live carefully (“how we lived”)

**Number two, choose how you live carefully.** Paul says, “You know how we lived among you for your sake” (1 Thess. 1:5). Living for someone else involves your life style. How you live your life is important. How you live is as important as what you believe. Your behavior communicates to others what you believe and what is important to you. Paul is going to go into great detail of how he lived among them in chapter 2, but the whole Bible is really a book that teaches you how to live.

- **Explain the principle**

The Bible tells us how to live our lives. Let me give you some examples of this. Three areas of your life that you need to choose to “live” correctly.

**First of all, live a pure life.** 1 Thessalonians 4:7 says, “For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.” Your lifestyle is important. Choose how you live carefully. This is in the context of God’s Word teaching us to avoid sexual immorality of any kind. So don’t mess around before marriage. Don’t mess around outside of your marriage. Stay away from pornography. Protect yourself from having an emotional affair as well. You want to be able to say you lived a sexually pure life. Choose how you live carefully.

**Secondly, live a peaceful life.** 1 Peter 3:8 says, “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. (9) Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing....” How you live matters. Choose how you live carefully. God wants you to live in harmony with people. The way you do that is to be sympathetic when someone is hurting or being rude. Treat others with love. Be compassionate and caring toward them. Be humble and don’t act like you are better than them. Choose how you live carefully. Choose to live with sympathy, love, compassion, and humility.

**Third, live a productive life.** Notice Titus 3:14 which says, “Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.” Your lifestyle is important. Choose to live a productive and useful life. Don’t loaf and don’t be lazy. Do what is good at work, school, and at home. As a child of God, you don’t want your life to be the one that is unproductive and not helpful. You don’t want to be the burden. Pay attention to how you live. Don’t let people point at you and say, “He’s lazy. She’s sloppy. He’s selfish. She only cares about herself.” Live a productive life.<sup>2</sup>

- **Apply the principle**

So Paul says, “You know how we lived...” Paul was never ashamed to tell others to examine his life. He was confident that the life he led supported the gospel that he preached. Can you say that? Can you say, “Go ahead and examine my life. You know what I am like.” What if you were to say that? Go ahead turn over every rock and open every door of my life. I am confident that you will find Christ in each room. Will you find me to be perfect? No, but you will find the Lord in every area of my life cleaning, remodeling, moving things around, and adjusting my life for His glory.

### **3. Your life makes the greatest impact in the presence of people (“among you”)**

**Number three, your life makes the greatest impact in the presence of people.** Paul says, “You know how we lived among you for your sake.”

- **The Principle Explained**

Those who make the greatest impact on people are those who spend time with people. Living for someone else means being involved in someone else’s life. You must live “among” people to influence people. This is so important that you see God doing this through Jesus Christ. John 1:14 says, “The Word [Jesus Christ] became flesh and made

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<sup>2</sup> **Philippians 1:27** summarizes the idea when Paul says, “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” The life you choose to live should add value and credibility to the gospel of Jesus Christ. So when someone looks at how you live they recognize that your life is marked by the person of Jesus Christ.

His dwelling among us. [Why?] [So that we could see] His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus knew that in order for Him to make the greatest level of impact He would need to live among us. He would have to get involved and be a part of people’s lives. Your life makes the greatest impact *with* people, “among” people.

We see this again in 2 Corinthians 6:16 where God says, “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people.” God understands the connection of being with people in order to impact and lead people.

1 Thessalonians 2:7 says, “We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.” Paul didn’t say, “We only ministered to you from a distance, but we were with you, among you, and rubbed shoulders with you and while our lives were connected we were gentle like a loving mother is toward her little child. When you are with people, be gentle. Everyone’s heart, mind, and emotions are very fragile, be gentle in what you say and how you treat them, but make sure you are among them.

1 Thessalonians 2:10 says, “You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.” Paul just finished saying “You know how we lived.” Part of that lifestyle included *holiness* (staying away from sin), *righteousness* (doing what is right), and *blameless* (doing it for the right reasons). He lived this way among the people so they could see him and so he could make an impact.<sup>3</sup>

- **The Principle Applied**

The question we need to answer is, “Whose life are you in that you can influence?” God wants you to live among people. He doesn’t want you to bury yourself in a hole and hide from people. Get connected. Get plugged in. Develop friendship. Be a friend. Let others be a friend to you. Let Christ who is in you minister to them through you.

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<sup>3</sup> The people who have had the greatest impact on my life were those who were in my life.

#### 4. Your life is to be lived for others (“for your sake”)

**Number four, your life is to be lived for others.** Paul says, “You know how we lived among you for your sake.” Living for someone else means adjusting your life for someone else.

- **The Principle Explained**

“For your sake” has also been translated as “in order to help you” (NCV), “for your benefit” (HCSB), “for your good” (AMP). As a Christian, you filter the decisions of your life based on how it will impact, influence, and benefit another’s spiritual development. This is echoed in Romans 8:36 where Paul says, “For your sake we face death all day long.” Then in 1 Corinthians 4 Paul is describing how he has placed certain limitations and freedoms on himself for the growth and benefit of others. He says, “Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, ‘Do not go beyond what is written’” (1 Cor. 4:6). As believers, we are to approach life with a “for your sake” mentality. Your life is to be lived for others. This idea falls into that category of “dying to yourself.” [See Ephesians 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:10]

- **The principle Illustrated<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>4</sup> Paul was always thinking about the spiritual growth and development of other people. For example, there was this situation with the Corinthian Christians that dealt with eating food sacrificed to idols. In Corinth there were these pagan temples where they would take animals and sacrifice these animals to various gods. There was a belief that demons attached themselves to food in order to get inside of people. Many people were saved out of this type of paganism. Even though they believed Jesus was their Lord and Savior they brought with them some pagan beliefs that were not Biblical. They had not had time to learn and grow out of some of these pagan beliefs like demons attaching themselves to meat and contaminating those who eat it. So with that context listen to what Paul says beginning in 1 Corinthians 8:7, “But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. (8) But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. (9) Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. (10) For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, won’t he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? (11) So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge, (12) when you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. (13) Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.” Here is what Paul is saying, “For the sake of that brother I will place a limitation on me based on his conscience so that I will not cause him to stumble.” There are times when you know that what you are about to do is perfectly fine, it’s not sin, it’s not evil, but there are other believers whose conscience will not

We see this demonstrated by our Lord in John 3:16 which says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, [why?] that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” One of the reasons Jesus died on the cross was for your sake, for your benefit. Jesus adjusted His life by leaving heaven and coming to earth for your sake, so that you could have eternal life in heaven.

- **The Principle Applied**

The question you need to answer is, “Who are you living for?” Are you living for the sake of your wife? Are you living for the sake of your husband? Are you living for the sake of your parents? Are you living for the sake of that person at work? That person at school you sit beside each week? Who are you living for? How are you adjusting your life to be a blessing for those in your life?

## **Conclusion**

- **Living for someone else involves your reputation.** You are known by how you live. Build a reputation of someone who is in love with Jesus and in love with people.
- **Living for someone else involves your lifestyle,** so choose the way you live very carefully. Choose a life based God’s Word that promotes purity, peace, and productivity. Live the kind of life that is worth examining and following.
- **Living for someone else involves being in the presence of people.** You need to be among people to influence them. Pour your life into people, especially those who are already in your life.
- **Living for someone else means adjusting your life for someone else.** There are things you are going to say “yes” to and things you are going to say “no” to for the sake of others so that they will come to know Jesus and grow spiritually.

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allow them to do what you are about to do. When that happens, for their sake, you adjust your life for their sake based on their conscience. You do not want them to believe they just sinned against God with that activity, even though you know it wasn’t a sin. They haven’t grown to that point yet.