

FIVE LAWS OF THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Part 1 of Preparing for 2025. 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10.
Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. January 5, 2024.

MY REMINDERS APP

I use the Reminders App every day.

- I have almost 100 reminders to keep me on track.

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is like an ancient Reminders app.

- Written in 50 AD to new believers in the Greek city.
- He reminds them of their authentic conversion and identity in Christ.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace.

2 We always thank God for all of you, making mention of you constantly in our prayers. 3 We recall, in the presence of our God and Father, your work produced by faith, your labor motivated by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance. You know how we lived among you for your benefit, 6 and you yourselves became imitators of us and of the Lord when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit. 7 As a result, you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place that your faith in God has gone out. Therefore, we don't need to say anything, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception we had from you: how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead — Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

THE FIVE LAWS

THE FIRST LAW: HEARING - verse 5

- Acts 17 describes Paul's experience in Thessalonica.
- He brought the gospel to the city but was forced to leave by violent opponents.
- Why did he endure such challenges? Because hearing comes before believing. People need to hear the gospel.

Romans 10:14 (CSB) How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?

- God releases spiritual power when we hear the gospel.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (CSB) our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance.

THE SECOND LAW: TURNING - verse 9

- They *“turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”* (v. 9).
- First, they turned from idols. For example: the Greco-Roman pantheon, Egyptian gods, Mystery cults, and the Imperial cult.
- Then, they turned to God. The word for turning could be translated “converted.” It starts at a moment in time and goes on for a lifetime.
- Idols kept us in bondage, but we *“serve”* God now. We belong to him. He is our true/living Lord forever.

THE THIRD LAW: EMBRACING - verse 6

- Paul proclaimed the gospel and the people welcomed the message and embraced Jesus - see Acts 17:2-4.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 (CSB) in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed (Gk: accept, receive) the message with joy from the Holy Spirit.

- This is called “saving faith,” a powerful drive to put our trust in Jesus at any cost.
- What makes the drive so strong? Nothing can compete with the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE FOURTH LAW: LIVING

- The initial moment of conversion and faith is the beginning, not the end.
- Genuine saving faith always produces a godly lifestyle.
 - They worked, labored, and endured - verse 3.
 - They believed, loved, and hoped - verse 3.
 - They imitated Paul’s godly life - verse 5b-6.
 - They stayed in faith despite “severe persecution” - verse 6.
 - They were examples to other churches - verses 7-8.
 - They looked forward to the return of Christ - verse 10.

THE FIFTH LAW: DOUBTING

- Doubts are normal. Two kinds: intellectual, emotional.
- Paul wrote specifically to address the Thessalonians’ doubts.
 - He assured them they were God’s people.
 - He reminded them of their powerful conversion experience.
 - He noted their exemplary, Christ-centered lives.
- Trust the truth. Ask for help. Receive God’s gifts - Spirit, church, Bible. Remember your conversion, baptism, and brighter days.

DEALING WITH DOUBTS

With help from Perplexity.ai

1. "Engaging with Doubt: Real-Life Faith Stories" by Randy Newman

- Examine doubts to see if they are as substantive as they seem
- Recognize that faith is inevitable - what do we trust in?
- Understand that doubt can be a pathway to confident faith

2. "Doubt: A Personal History" by Scott Hubbard

- Normalize doubt as a trial of faith
- Find friends (both living and historical figures) to confide in
- Take time away from obsessing over doubts
- Focus on Jesus/God's glory rather than demanding answers now

3. "Dealing with Doubts" by Ministry127

- Don't confuse faith with feelings or constant emotional highs
- It's okay to ask honest questions about faith
- Intellectual and emotional doubts are common

*"The greatest saints are often those
who have learned the paradoxical skill of doubting faithfully"*

Sources

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/doubt-a-personal-history>
- <https://ministry127.com/christian-living/dealing-with-doubts>