

Small Group Discussion Guide — Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

- Joshua mentioned the early church father Tertullian's observation about how the unbelieving world in the third century observed the love that the church had for one another. Jesus says, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35) Why is "love" such a compelling power? How is it such an effective evangelism tool?
- How does Paul's teaching in 4:9-12 flow out of his prayer for them in 3:11-13? How does this command to love fall under the umbrella of pleasing God? (4:1)
- What does Paul mean that they were "God-taught"? How is the believer "taught by God" to love the church? (see Romans 5:5; 1 John 3:10, 14)
- Do you agree with the statement that while a Christian may need to be taught or corrected in how to love his fellow believers better, or even be challenged to love them more and more, however, the believer doesn't need to be taught to love the church? How is this "love" now part of their new nature?
- What are practical ways you can grow in your love for the church? Where do you see that you aren't loving others more and more? Where were you challenged today in your love for the church?
- In vs. 11, what three expressions of love does Paul focus on? Why these? What was perhaps going on in this church that would lead Paul to mention these three? (see 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12)
- What are ways that you can "love" others by aspiring to live a quiet life? Minding your own affairs? Working with our hands?
- How does a church guard against the deadly danger of gossip? How about laziness in our giving and serving and caring for one another?
- Consider our church's own reputation to the immediate community around us. How might our behavior win the respect of outsiders?