

**Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12**

## Behavior that Opens Doors

### **1 Thessalonians 4:11,12**

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders.

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Has this ever happened to you? Your family is out in public. A child misbehaves or does something obnoxious. A parent says, “Stop that! What will people think?”

Ah, yes. The age-old “what will people think” question! Parents have been using it for years to call kids on the carpet for their behavior. That’s because many times human beings are motivated by the approval or respect of others. Or we don’t want to *lose* the approval or respect of others. We do not want to be embarrassed. We want to look good.

Let’s think about the role that appearances play in a Christian’s life. In our reading today, the apostle Paul urges the early Christians to live good lives “so that they might win the respect of outsiders” (v 12). Because they are Jesus-followers, Paul urges them to *act* like Jesus-followers: Keep showing love to one another. Lead peaceful lives. Be busy and productive. This good behavior would get noticed by their non-Christian neighbors.

Why does getting noticed matter? After all, *what I do is between me and God, isn’t it? It should not matter what other people think.*

Paul, speaking with Jesus’ authority, wanted the Christians to “win the respect of outsiders”—not to impress people, and not so the believers can feel good about themselves. Rather, Paul says that the good behavior of the Christians will get noticed and make people wonder *why* Christians live as they do. The outsiders might ask about this “Jesus” the Christians follow. And then a door would open to talk about who Jesus is and why the Christians follow him.

When other people notice our good behavior, a door opens to talk about *why* we behave as we do. Outsiders get a peek inside our hearts to see Jesus living there. We get a chance to talk about what Jesus means to us. This is how the gospel spread across the world in those early days of the Christian church. And this is how it still spreads today, as we Christians live lives that honor Jesus.

Jesus said it himself: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). In our reading today, Paul reminded the early Christians of Jesus’ words. Now we as family members can remind each other, too. As followers of Jesus, our behavior matters. Our good behavior may lead others to Jesus.

*The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.*

### **Questions for the Younger Children**

- How do other people know that Jesus lives in your heart?
- What are some ways you can show people that Jesus lives in your heart without using any words?

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- Share a time when you noticed someone's good behavior.
- What are some behaviors people might respect?

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- Discuss a time when you or a family member's good behavior or decisions reflected faith in Jesus. What impression did this behavior have on you?
- What important tools do we have to encourage one another to live the Christian life? (ref. 2 Timothy 3:16, Ephesians 4:32)

### **Closing Prayer:**

Jesus, Savior, help us lead lives that honor you. Please let others see my behavior and see how important you are to me. And help us all encourage one another in love to behave in ways that honor you. In your name we pray, Amen.