

Sermon & Bible Study Guide

Substance Abuse

March 2005

Sermon Outline

Avoiding Evil

Emphasis Passage: 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

Context

In 1 Thessalonians 4, the Apostle Paul began teaching the people of Thessalonica about the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. His purpose was to give them a message of hope in the face of all that they endured on a daily basis from their unbelieving neighbors. He continued that message in chapter five. Beginning in verse 12, Paul proceeded to give practical instructions for daily life in light of the Lord's return. One of those injunctions concerned the evaluation of all that they heard—whether to accept it or not.

Though the issue of substance abuse is not specifically referenced in this passage, certain principles enunciated here apply to it. The Christian is to examine everything before allowing it into his or her life.

Introduction

Substance abuse, which includes the abuse of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, seems to be an ever-increasing problem today. For example, in 1988, the costs associated with alcohol abuse amounted to \$184.6 billion (see **OS1**). The costs associated with drug abuse in 1995 amounted to \$109.8 billion (see **OS2**). And the costs of tobacco abuse in 2002 were \$155 billion (see **OS3**).

That totals almost \$450 billion. Those figures do not include the cost of the substances themselves nor the attendant costs that accompany them (i.e., law enforcement, etc.). And when we take into account that two of those figures, which represent some of the latest ones available, are ten or more years old, today's costs are probably even more staggering.

But substance abuse is far more costly than just the economic costs. There are physical, emotional, spiritual, and social costs as well.

I. The dangers of substance abuse

- A. Dangers to oneself
 - 1. Addiction (**OS4**)
 - 2. Health problems (**OS5**)
 - 3. Death or injury (**OS5**)
 - 4. Academic problems (**OS5**)

5. Relationship to Christ
6. Relationship with others
- B. Dangers to others
 1. Assault (**OS5**)
 2. Sexual abuse (**OS5**)
 3. Unsafe sex (**OS5**)
 4. Crime (**OS5**)
 5. Drunk driving (**OS5**)
 6. Birth defects (**OS6**)
 7. Meth lab toxic fumes and explosions (**OS7**)
 8. Second-hand smoke (**OS8**)

II. The alternative to substance abuse (1 Thess. 5:21-22)

- A. Test everything (**WS1**) (**CC1, CC2, CC3, CC4**)
 1. The Scripture test—evaluate everything in light of Scripture [example of the Bereans (Acts 17:11)] (**CC4**)
 2. The personal test
 - a. The physical test—will this harm me physically?
 - b. The emotional test—will this lead to emotional dependence?
 - c. The social test—will this damage my relationship with other people?
 - d. The spiritual test—will this damage my relationship with Christ?
- B. Hold on to the good (**WS2**) (**CC1, CC5**)
- C. Avoid every kind of evil (**WS3, WS4, WS5**) (**CC6, CC7, CC8, CC9**)

Conclusion

Substance abuse leads to ruined lives through the emotional, physical, spiritual, and social trauma experienced by the abuser and the effects that person's abuse have on others. When added to the economic costs, substance abuse spells tragedy for everyone affected. It should be avoided altogether. God can give the spiritual and emotional strength to do that.

WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?

- If you are a pastor, preach on substance abuse. If you are not the pastor, ask him to do so.
- Learn how to counsel those involved in substance abuse.
- Volunteer to work a few hours each month in a rescue mission.
- Check with your local Christian bookstore or visit the ERLC bookstore (www.familybookstore.net) to find books that will help you understand the issue of substance abuse. Once you find a good resource, make it available for others to read as well.
- Ask your church to invite a local expert on the subject of substance abuse to lead a seminar describing what actions can be taken to help those who are addicted.

Resources

Avoiding Evil

Emphasis Passage: 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

Bible Translations

King James: Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

New King James: Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

New International Version: Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.

New American Standard: But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.

Holman Christian Standard: But test all things. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every form of evil.

New Living Translation: But test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Keep away from every kind of evil.

Other Helpful Scriptures

Bible verses about Substance Abuse

Leviticus 10:8-9; Deuteronomy 21:20-21; Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 21:17;
Proverbs 23:20-21; Proverbs 23:29-35; Ecclesiastes 2:3; Isaiah 5:11, 22; Isaiah 28:7-8;
Jeremiah 25:27; Hosea 4:10-11; Hosea 7:14; Joel 3:3; Nahum 1:10;
Habakkuk 2:15-16; Luke 21:34; Romans 6:12-14, 19; Romans 12:1; Romans 14:7-8, 21;
1 Corinthians 6:12, 19-20; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:7-8; 1 Timothy 3:3, 8;
Titus 1:7; Titus 2:3; 1 Peter 2:16; 2 Peter 2:19

Word Studies (WS)

WS1 — test — (dokimos); to *test* (literal or figurative); by implication to *approve* :- allow, discern, examine [James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.)—Greek #1381].

WS2 — hold fast — from Greek 2596 (kata) and Greek 2192 (echo); to *hold down (fast)*, in various applications (literal or figurative):- have, hold (fast), keep (in memory), let, × make toward, possess, retain, seize on, stay, take, withhold [James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.)—Greek #2722].

WS3 — abstain — middle (reflexive) of Greek 568 (apecho); to *hold oneself off*, i.e. *refrain* :- abstain [James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.)—Greek #567].

WS4 — kind — a *view*, i.e. *form* (literal or figurative):- appearance, fashion, shape, sight [James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.)—Greek #1491].

WS5 — evil — from a derivative of Greek 4192 (ponos); *hurtful*, i.e. *evil* [properly in effect or influence, and thus differing from Greek 2556 (kakos), which refers rather to *essential* character, as well as from Greek 4550 (sapos), which indicates *degeneracy* from original virtue]; figurative *calamitous*; also (passive) *ill*, i.e. *diseased*; but especially (morally) *culpable*, i.e. *derelict*, *vicious*, *facinorous*; neuter (singular) *mischievous*, *malice*, or (plural) *guilt*; masculine (singular) the *devil*, or (plural) *sinners* :- bad, evil, grievous, harm, lewd, malicious, wicked (-ness). See also Greek 4191 (ponerotos) [James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.)—Greek #4190].

Commentary Citations (CC)

CC1 — “Christians need to **test** what they hear and read, by comparing it with the Word of God, to determine if it is divine in its origin. This is difficult, but it is possible for a spiritual believer (1 Cor. 2:14). Each Christian has the responsibility and ability to do this, though some have more discernment than others (cf. Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1). What is discovered to be **good** (i.e., in harmony with what has been given by the Holy Spirit in the Word) should be retained.” [“Corporate Living (5:19-22),” *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Austin, TX: WORDSearch 5 Electronic version, WORDSearch Corp., 2004)].

CC2 — “[Paul] makes it clear that he expects them to use their common sense in such matters and to apply the necessary tests. At the same time the words he uses are quite general, and they must be held to apply to all kinds of things, and not simply to claimants to spiritual gifts. It is part of the process of living out the Christian life that constantly the servant of the Lord is called upon to discriminate between the base and the true, and to fashion his conduct accordingly.” [Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 177].

CC3 — “The word ‘test’ or ‘prove’ (KJV) is often used in testing metals or checking out budgets. ‘Prove all things’ (KJV) refers to the process of sifting out the genuine from the

counterfeit. Paul was not saying to try everything once. He was saying that we should test everything that represents itself as good. The good should be accepted. Every kind of evil should be avoided.” [John D. Hendrix, *To Thessalonians with Love* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982), 122-123].

CC4 — “Paul advised the Thessalonians to **Test everything**. The word *everything* is universal; it leaves nothing free from examination by spiritual standards and understanding. Paul did not explain how to carry out this testing. But certainly the fire of the Spirit (his convicting, guidance, and illumination), the instructions from the apostles and missionaries, and the written revelation of God are lenses through which we must scrutinize everything.” [Knut Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000), 75-76].

CC5 — “‘Hold on’ (*kateche*) may mean ‘to possess’ (cf. Phlm 13), but here it has the connotation of ‘remember’ the teaching. They should retain it with the intent of allowing it to shape their lives in Christ.” [D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 185].

CC6 — “‘Avoid’ (*apechomai*) means ‘to keep away from’ or ‘abstain from a teaching or a practice’ . . . The same word was used by the Jerusalem apostles when they wrote to the Gentile churches that they should ‘abstain from food sacrificed to idols . . . and from immorality’ (Acts 15:20).” [D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 185-186].

CC7 — “The word *eidous* means the outward appearance or form (Lk. iii. 22, ‘shape’), without any notion of unreality. It is also used in the sense of ‘sort, species, kind’. AV [Authorized Version] takes it in a third sense, ‘semblance’ as opposed to reality, but this does not seem to be attested elsewhere, and it is unlikely that the apostle would be concerned only with outward appearance.” [Leon Morris, *The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 106].

CC8 — “Every ‘kind of evil’ translates a word (*eidous*) that refers to the outward appearance of a thing. But *eidous* is not used here in a superficial way. There is no intent to draw a contrast between appearance and substance in this verse. Whatever ‘appears’ evil upon careful examination by the fellowship is assumed to be evil in fact.” [D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 186].

CC9 — “[Evil] is always to be understood in the active sense as denoting something malignant, working mischief, hurting all with whom it comes into contact. Who, then, would want to have contact with such a thing in any form? It blasts, poisons, kills. Keep away from it entirely. We should not restrict this command to the field of morals. The worst forms of wickedness consist of perversion of the truth, of spiritual lies, although today many look upon these forms with indifference and regard them rather harmless.

The fact that moral perversions are included is self-evident; these also work to destroy the spiritual life and appear in many forms.” [R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: The Wartburg Press, 1956), 363].

Other Sources (OS)

OS1 — The following statistics give a glimpse of the magnitude of problem drinking:

- Approximately 14 million Americans—7.4 percent of the population—meet the diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse or alcoholism.
- More than one-half of American adults have a close family member who has or is struggling with alcoholism.
- Approximately one in four children younger than 18 years old in the United States is exposed to alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence in the family.
- Of 11.1 million victims of violent crime each year, almost one in four, or 2.7 million, report that the offender had been drinking alcohol prior to committing the crime.
- Traffic crashes involving alcohol killed more than 16,000 people in 1997 alone.
- The estimated economic cost of alcohol abuse was \$184.6 billion for 1998 alone, or roughly \$638 for every man, woman, and child living in the United States that year.

Adapted from “Drinking Over the Life Span: Issues of Biology, Behavior, and Risk,” *Tenth Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health*, (<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/10report/chap01.pdf>) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000 [Accessed November 8, 2004].

OS2 — “There is no question that substance abuse is a pervasive cause of serious health and social problems. A study conducted by Henrich Harwood and colleagues (1998) updated estimates for the costs of drug and alcohol abuse, taking into account factors such as health care expenditures and productivity effects (e.g., lost earnings, crime, welfare, and motor vehicle crashes). It was found that the economic costs of drug abuse alone in 1995 were \$109.8 billion. Other estimates from this study suggest the economic costs of drug abuse increased 2.8 times from 1975 to 1992. Reasons for the cost increase included the emergence of cocaine abuse, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, an eightfold increase in State and Federal incarcerations for drug abuse (partly attributable to crack abuse), and about a threefold increase in drug-related crimes. A recent analysis by CSAT indicates that the total expenditure for substance abuse treatment in the United States in 1997 was \$11.9 billion; the total societal cost attributed to substance abuse in that year was \$294 billion (Coffey et al. 2001).”

“The Cost of Substance Abuse,” *Multiple Indicator Analysis*, (<http://csat.samhsa.gov/mia/contents.htm>, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [Accessed November 30, 2004].

OS3 — The Cost of Tobacco Use

- Direct medical expenditures attributed to smoking total more than \$75 billion per year. In addition, smoking costs an estimated \$80 billion per year in lost productivity.
- About 14 percent of all Medicaid expenditures are for smoking-related illnesses.
- Each of the approximately 22 billion packs of cigarettes sold in the United States in 1999 cost the nation an estimated \$7.18 in medical care costs and lost productivity.

“The Cost of Tobacco Use,” *Preventing Tobacco Use*, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/pe_factsheets/pe_tobacco.htm [Accessed November 30, 2004].

OS4 — “How do addicts feel? Addicts feel as if they are trapped and out of control. They feel like abject worshippers, devoted to something that can be very dangerous. They feel desperate hunger and thirst for something. They feel like they can’t let go, clinging even when the addictive behavior yields very few pleasures and a great deal of pain. They feel like they are in bondage. Addicts feel out of control, enslaved, stuck, and without hope for freedom or escape. Something other than the living God controls them, and the controlling object tells them how to live, think, and feel.”

Edward T. Welch, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001), pp. 11-12.

OS5 — According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, college students are faced with what might be called a “culture of drinking.” In a typical year, student drinking is responsible for:

- Death: 1,400 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes (Hingson et al., 2002).
- Injury: 500,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are unintentionally injured under the influence of alcohol (Hingson et al., 2002).
- Assault: More than 600,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking (Hingson et al., 2002).
- Sexual Abuse: More than 70,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape (Hingson et al., 2002).
- Unsafe Sex: 400,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 had unprotected sex and more than 100,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report having been too intoxicated to know if they consented to having sex (Hingson et al., 2002).
- Academic Problems: About 25 percent of college students report academic consequences of their drinking including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall (Engs et al., 1996; Presley et al., 1996a, 1996b; Wechsler et al., 2002).
- Health Problems/Suicide Attempts: More than 150,000 students develop an alcohol-related health problem (Hingson et al., 2002) and between 1.2 and 1.5 percent of students indicate that they tried to commit suicide within the past year due to drinking or drug use (Presley et al., 1998).
- Drunk Driving: 2.1 million students between the ages of 18 and 24 drove under the influence of alcohol last year (Hingson et al., 2002). More than 60 percent of

- college men and almost 50 percent of college women who engage in frequent high-risk drinking report that they drink and drive.
- Crime: Alcohol has been linked to one-half of all campus crime (Wechsler, 2002).
 - Alcohol Abuse and Dependence: 31 percent of college students met criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol abuse and 6 percent for a diagnosis of alcohol dependence in the past 12 months, according to questionnaire-based self-reports about their drinking (Knight et al., 2002).

“Alcohol Facts: Understanding the Problem,” www.outsidetheclassroom.com.

OS6 — “The consumption of alcohol during pregnancy is one of the leading preventable causes of birth defects and childhood disabilities in the United States. The adverse effects associated with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) range from growth deficiency, brain structure and function anomalies, and abnormalities of the head and face. In 2000, the cost of treating FAS-affected infants, children, and adults was over \$2.8 billion. The lifetime cost per child affected with FAS is estimated to be \$1.4 million.” Some facts and statistics related to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome are:

- More than one in ten pregnant women report current alcohol use.
- In 1995, four times as many pregnant women consumed alcohol frequently as in 1991. Researchers speculate that the increase in alcohol consumption by pregnant women may be attributed to widespread reports on the health benefits of moderate drinking. While the overall rate of any alcohol use (at least one drink) among pregnant women has declined since 1995, rates of frequent and binge drinking remain at high levels.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that more than 130,000 pregnant women per year in the U.S. consume alcohol at levels shown to increase the risk of having a baby with FAS or other alcohol-related condition.
- Of the women who reported drinking during their pregnancy, 23 percent reported drinking in their first trimester; 6 percent reported drinking in their third trimester. FAS occurs in an estimated one to two live births per every 1,000 in the U.S. each year.
- Fetal Alcohol Effects (a less severe set of alcohol-related abnormalities) is estimated to occur in three to five live births per every 1,000 in the U.S. each year. Although the physical symptoms of FAE are less obvious, the neurobehavioral disorders are just as severe, the risk for secondary disabilities is higher, and therefore the outcome for FAE can be more serious than FAS.
- According to the birth defects monitoring program, FAS rates among American Indians occur in three live births per every 1,000. This is compared to a rate of 0.6 per 1,000 live births among African Americans and 0.1 per 1,000 live births among Caucasians.
- FAS is not just a childhood disorder; exposure to alcohol as a fetus can cause a wide range of lifelong physical and mental disabilities, including mental retardation, learning disabilities, and serious behavioral problems.
- Fetal alcohol exposure may increase the risk for later alcohol, tobacco, and drug dependence in adults.

“Fact Sheet: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome,” *Booze News*, www.cspinet.org/booze/fctindex.htm, November 2003 update [Accessed November 8, 2004].

OS7 — “People ‘cooking’ methamphetamine in thousands of clandestine laboratories across the nation produce a toxic cloud of hydrochloric acid, phosphine, iodine, and methamphetamine that spreads through the entire house or apartment, according to researchers at National Jewish Medical and Research Center. The findings help identify and quantify the health hazard clandestine methamphetamine laboratories pose to adults and children living in the labs, and to health and law enforcement personnel entering them.

“Illegal methamphetamine use has skyrocketed in recent years in the Denver metro area and around the country. Because methamphetamine is relatively easy to manufacture, users produce it at thousands of home labs across the country. In Colorado alone, busts of methamphetamine laboratories rose from 51 in 1998 to 450 in 2002.

“Occupants of the labs, including children, who are found in about 30 percent of them, are exposed to a variety of toxic chemicals. Law enforcement personnel have reported illnesses they attribute to repeated exposures during methamphetamine laboratory investigations.”

“Toxic Brew of Chemicals Cooked Up in Methamphetamine Laboratories,” National Jewish Medical and Research Center, http://nationaljewish.org/news/meth_results.html, January 19, 2004.

OS8 — Secondhand smoke is a serious problem. Scientists have established that it is a cause of disease in nonsmokers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that secondhand smoke causes 3,000 adult nonsmokers to die each year of lung cancer. Some experts point to secondhand smoke as a contributing factor in cardiovascular disease, which also results in many deaths each year. It is also known that in children younger than 18 months, “secondhand smoke causes 150,000 to 300,000 respiratory tract infections a year.” Children exposed to secondhand smoke are also more likely to experience asthma and ear infections. Further, it has been linked to about 60 Sudden Infant Death syndrome cases.

A new product on the market is now revealing that people who thought they were safe from the effects of secondhand smoke may not be so safe after all. One woman with asthma had convinced her husband to smoke outside the house, thinking that made her safe, but a simple home test proved otherwise. TobacAlert, a test that measures the level of cotinine in the urine—a by-product of the body’s reaction to nicotine—registered the woman a 2 on a scale of 6, only one notch below the level of a regular smoker. One possible explanation is that, while her husband did agree to smoke outside when they were home, she was exposed while they were in the same places together, such as the car, socializing with friends, or in local restaurants.

Deborah Marion of the Wellness Council of West Virginia uses a similar test available to medical professionals about 40 times per day. She says that it is sobering for smokers to see a numerical value of the exposure to their spouse or child.

“New Home Test Boosts Case Against Smoking,” www.washingtonpost.com, January 19, 2004.

Note: For further information on substance abuse, see the accompanying fact sheet on this resource CD or visit our Web site at www.faihandfamily.com in the *Issues* section.

Bible Study Guide

Avoiding Evil

Emphasis Passage: 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

This is a suggested Bible study for any size group. The accompanying sermon notes, fact sheet, and PowerPoint presentation serve as resources as you prepare to lead this Bible study. Answers are provided with the questions when appropriate, but do not be too quick to give the answers. Allow the participants time to talk about the questions among themselves and offer their own thoughts and reflections.

Before class: Write the following information on the board in columns:

\$184.6 billion	1988
\$109.8 billion	1995
\$155.0 billion	2002

Create Learning Readiness: Using the information in the context section of the Sermon Outline, set the background for this study. Explain that even though the phrase “substance abuse” is not found in this passage, the principles found in the passage do apply. The Christian is to examine everything before allowing it into his or her life.

Say: I have put some figures on the board. These are the figures for alcohol abuse, drug abuse, and tobacco abuse respectively. The total of these three figures is almost \$450 billion. That amount does not include the costs of the substances themselves nor the attendant costs, such as law enforcement, traffic accidents, etc.

Ask: When you look at the dates beside those figures (they are the latest we could find), do you think those figures are still realistic? Why or why not?

Ask: What other kinds of cost might there be to substance abuse? (Physical cost, emotional costs, spiritual costs, and social costs.)

Make four columns on the board and put the words physical, emotional, spiritual, and social at the top.

Ask: Can you name some of these different kinds of costs to substance abuse? (Write answers on board in proper column.)

Say: There are several dangers of substance abuse to oneself. One of those is addiction, whether it is to alcohol, drugs, or tobacco. One can be addicted to any one of them or any combination of them.

Ask: What are some of the feelings that you think someone who is addicted to something might experience? (After responses, read the quote found in **OS4** in the Resources section of this guide.)

Say: There are other dangers to oneself from substance abuse. There are health problems, possible death or injury, and academic problems (Read **OS5** in the Resources section of this guide.)

Ask: Can you think of any other dangers to oneself that might occur when one is involved in substance abuse? (Effects on one's relationship to Christ and relationships with others.)

Say: That's a lot of danger just to the person involved. But there are other dangers involved—the dangers to others.

Ask: What do you think some of those dangers to others might be? (Write answers on the board. The possible list could include assault, sexual abuse, unsafe sex, crime, drunk driving, birth defects, exposure to meth lab fumes and explosions, and second-hand smoke.)

After responses, read some of the statistics and quotes concerning these dangers in **OS5**, **OS6**, **OS7**, and **OS8** in the Resource section of this guide. You also might refer to the accompanying fact sheet for other informative material that could be useful in this part of the discussion.

Say: In the focal passage for this study (1 Thess. 5:21-21), Paul points out three things that all of us should do to avoid becoming involved in any kind of substance abuse.

Ask: What are those three things? [(1) Test everything, (2) hold on to the good, and (3) avoid every kind of evil.]

Read **CC1**, **CC2**, **CC3**, and **CC4** from the Resource section of this guide. As each is read, point out one or two key ideas regarding the testing that Paul says we are to do.

Say: There are two types of tests that we can all apply. The first is the Scriptural test: how does this line up with the Bible? An example of this is found in Acts 17:11 where Luke mentions a group of people who did just that. (Have someone read Acts 17:11 aloud.)

Ask: Can you think of some Scriptures that might apply to this area of life? (See "Other Helpful Scriptures" in the Resource section.)

Say: Another test might be called the personal test. It includes four questions that we should ask ourselves when we are faced with a decision about something: (1) the physical test—will this harm me physically? (2) the emotional test—will this lead to emotional dependence? (3) the social test—will this damage my relationship with other people? And (4) the spiritual test—will this damage my relationship with Christ?

Say: Paul then says that we are to “hold on to the good.” (Read the quote in **CC5** and the last sentence in **CC1** again. Also refer to **WS2**.) All of these references talk about retaining what we already have learned.

Ask: Since most of us have a tendency to forget things so easily, how might we retain the lessons we’ve learned when the temptations come?

Say: The last thing Paul mentions is to “avoid every kind of evil.” (Read or summarize **WS3, WS4, WS5, CC6, CC7, CC8, and CC9**.)

Ask: Why is it important for us to avoid all kinds of evil and even the appearance of evil? (To not do so might cause another believer to stumble or an unbeliever to turn away from salvation.)

Say: Substance abuse leads to ruined lives through the emotional, physical, spiritual, and social trauma experienced by the one who is the abuser and the effects that person’s abuse has on others. When added to the economic costs, substance abuse spells tragedy for everyone involved. It should be avoided altogether. God can give the spiritual and emotional strength to do that.

Ask: Will you make a personal commitment now to avoid any kind of substance abuse?