

Originally produced for the Women's Ministry of The Shoreline Church, San Clemente. © 2019
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Arise

a new day dawns surrounded in Hope she steps out in Faith ready to Love in His name full of resounding joy she fears nothing for He is with her always

Study Contents

Introduction About This Study

by Shannon Davidson

6

Week One Thankfulness Abounds!

by Shannon Davidson

8

Week Two Becoming the Message

by Tracey Russell

30

Week Three A Heart Compelled by Love

by Dianne Sanborn

57

Week Four Kingdom of Joy

by Lori Moe

84

Week Five
The Ministry of Prayer
by Shannon Davidson

112

Week Six
Abound More and More
by Dianne Sanborn

133

Week Seven
The Day of the Lord

by Carla Erland

158

Week Eight
Departing Words

by Dawnielle Hodgman

188

Week Nine Prayer

by Carla Erland and Valerie Stephens

206

introduction

About the Study

Our faith is best lived out in community. That's how God intended it. Not only for our individual growth and encouragement but also for the strength and maturity of the corporate body of believers, the Church. Our study on Thessalonians that we are calling *Resounding Joy* is designed for both interactive personal study and group discussion. It is our desire that the interactive questions and group time together weekly will help enhance your learning and application of the Scriptures.

No matter where this study finds you today, we want you to know that we understand busy schedules and the demanding roles that are required of you. It's for that very reason that we've decided to offer you options for your own level of participation in this study.

Level 1: Participate in the Teaching only

Too many times I've watched women drop out of Bible study because they couldn't keep up with the homework. The main goal isn't that every page of homework is complete. The goal is to get you into the Word of God and a little is better than none at all. So even if you can't get to even one question, still come each week to hear the teaching and be a part of fellowship in group time. You will never regret it.

Level 2: Participate in the Teaching + handwrite the book of 1 Thessalonians

Another option for you if you can't get to the questions each week is to write out the passage of Scripture that we will be studying. As you write out those precious living words of Scripture pray and ask God to speak to you through that exercise of writing.

Level 3: Participate in the Teaching + handwrite the book of 1 Thessalonians + do the weekly homework

Moving up to this level in which you meet with God on the pages of Scripture numerous times each week with exponentially increase your experience. When you turn to the last page, you will truly know this letter inside and out!

Level 4: Dig Deeper

You can also go deeper each week with the Dig Deeper option throughout the study.

Ok, sweet one, which level seems the most doable for you right now?



1

2

3

4

I'm asking you up front because I'd like to challenge you to go one level above what seems reasonably attainable. If you're willing stretch yourself one more level. We have nothing to lose here but much Scripture to gain. Do only what blesses and not what burdens.

So with that...let's get started shall we?





by Shannon Davidson

On Being "In"



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

- 1 Thessalonians 1:1

To my beautiful sisters of San Clemente who are firmly established in God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. May you know and embrace the reality of your position as a daughter of God and the totality of the divine benefits purchased for you by our Savior. That your lives would be deeply rooted in the truth of God's Word and your hearts and minds tethered tightly to the throne of grace. My prayer for you is that you would be like a ship at full sail. Positioned and ready for a fresh wind of the Spirit to release you into a whole new realm of effectiveness and of beauty and of impact for the glory of Jesus Christ through what He has called you to do. That you might experience a fresh vision, renewed energy and be ready for a new adventure with Him. May confidence and strength swell within you as Christ your righteousness sets the course. Our journey begins on the shores of Thessalonica, and we have before us real lives, with real doubts, concerns, and fears. This is not just a Bible study, this is a missionary journey. So, let's stand shoulder to shoulder with our toes buried deep in the warm sand and our faces fixed on the wide expanse of the horizon. You are part of the expedition because you belong here, you have a purpose unique and substantial. We are doing the gospel thing. It's time to get back to the stuff of your calling. Today is the day.

Before we jump into our study, please take a moment to pray and commit yourself afresh to God. 'Father, let us truly experience this letter to the Thessalonians. To have an earnest deposit of what we are endeavoring to study. Come to us in word and power of the Holy Spirit and with full conviction! Not just words but living breathing revelation that is what we are looking for. Do this over our entire series. May we operate in health and vitality in the body of Christ. Amen.'

As we get started let's get the backstory of where the journey of faith began for the Thessalonians. Luke supplies the details in Acts.

Please read Acts 15:36-16:5 and briefly describe this scene and those involved below.

Now jump ahead and read Acts 17:1-4. Please respond to the following questions.

What was Paul and Silas' first stop?

How much time did they spend in the Synagogue?

What method did Paul use in his approach to the Thessalonians (v.3)?

When Paul arrived in Thessalonica, he found a synagogue and shared the gospel with those in the city. He spent three Sabbaths interpreting the Scriptures, using it as evidence to persuade them about Jesus (Dig Deeper: Luke 24:45-46; 1 Cor. 1:23; 15:3-4). The response was mixed, fill in the blanks below with the verse from Acts 17:4 NLT.

"And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number	of the
God-fearing Greeks and a number of	

We find out from the text that there were Jews and Greeks, as well as women who were the elite of the city. Don't you love that Luke included this? As a woman called to serve women, statements like this stir my heart. You may not think of yourself as elite or a leader, but quite frankly, you are among the number of leading women. Because all it takes to lead is for you to take initiative and be an example for others to follow as you follow Jesus!

Wisdom and counsel can be found in the company of women who've not only chased after God but who have been chased by God. Women who have been wildly awakened by the Holy Spirit have a portion of God's love and compassion to express to others. The earth is waiting to see what happens when God's beauty and love have not only captured but mobilized a company of women.

Please continue reading Acts 17:5-15. Describe briefly what happened below.

Due to an overwhelming response to the gospel "the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil" so Paul and his companions headed off in the cover of night to Berea. But their stay in this city didn't last long either.

Where did Paul, Silas and Timothy end up? (vv.14-15)

With Paul, Silas and Timothy fleeing from one city to another, this new Thessalonian church was left without leadership and without receiving all of the instruction they needed. And because of the persecution that was directed primarily at the apostles, it overflowed to these new believers. Paul was so concerned for them that he decided to send Timothy back to the city to "strengthen and en-

courage" them and to "find out about" their new-found faith (1 Thessalonians 3:2,5). While Timothy traveled to Thessalonica, Paul moved south to Corinth and there he waited for the news from Timothy. On Timothy's arrival in Corinth, he shared with Paul the "good news" of their faith despite their hardship. 1 Thessalonians is Paul's response and it is filled with thanksgiving to God for them as well as an encouragement. Let's open up to the text that will be the launching pad for our study over the next 9 weeks.

Please read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10.

This week we will be focusing our attention on the first four verses of this passage. Today we will be looking at verse 1. For those willing to participate, we're adopting the discipline of writing Thessalonians in the back of our workbook as we go.

Please turn to the back of your workbook and write 1 Thessalonians 1:1 in the Bible translation of your choosing.

Look back at the verse you wrote and circle the word 'in'. On first glance, this verse might not seem that unusual, but Paul actually phrases the beginning of this letter differently than his other letters to the churches. In other letters that Paul has written his descriptions of the church would be the other way around, namely 'the church of God in Corinth' (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1). He could have written to 'the church of God in Thessalonica' but instead he wrote to the church of the Thessalonians in God (see also 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Both accounts of the church are true. These believers are living in Thessalonica, and also living in God. But because of where Paul placed the preposition it gives a different nuance in these statements.

What kind of relationship do you think Paul has in mind by including the preposition 'in'?

We don't know why Paul chose to address the letter in this way. But it's possible to surmise that perhaps this young persecuted church needed reminding that in the midst of their trials their security was in God and He in them. And that 'in' God our source of life is found. Still, every church has two homes, two environments, two habitats. It lives in God and it lives in the world. The church of the Thessalonians finds its unique identity in its relationship with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And just like these Thessalonian believers, being found in Christ is your true identity, your complete freedom to be who God has made and redeemed you to be. Being 'in' Christ, that's the key to your life. The Apostle Paul implores us to live our lives in Christ. He lives this way himself, boasting, "I glory in Christ" (Romans 5:17). In fact, in his letters, he encourages us to be "in Christ," "in him," or "in the Lord" 160 times!

These are just a few out of many verses where Paul talks about being "in" Christ. Please look up each verse below and note what you discover.
Galatians 3:26-28
Romans 8:1
Colossians 3:3

Share what it means to you to be "in" Christ.

To have your identity in Christ is not just a matter of claiming Bible verses for yourself. It means that you're placing your confidence for life and eternity in the Lord Jesus Christ. To be in Christ means you're learning to do all that you do with and for Jesus in the Kingdom of God. It means that you're being formed into the image of the Lord and you want other people to see Jesus when they look at you. But Paul wanted us to grow beyond the great blessing of receiving Christ in me. He showed us that Christ was welcoming us into His home, to live with Him and in Him, to live in His way and for His glory, to be a blessing to Him and to other people in His name. Imagine if the cross of Jesus Christ was the most dominant marking of your self-image? You'd know that you are so loved. You'd be so stable and confident. You'd be enthusiastically sharing the grace of the Lord with everyone you could. The Apostle Paul prayed for you "that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in Him" (Ephesians 3:17, NLT). He knew that receiving Christ into our hearts was the beginning of growing into God's way of abundant living.

What does it mean to you to have your identity in Christ? How does this knowledge affect your day in and day out routine? Take some time to write out a prayer to God of thanksgiving for your identity "in" Christ and ask Him to let this knowledge hit you like a wave of fresh truth.



Worship Song Suggestion: Who You Say I Am, Hillsong; Stand in Your Love - Josh Baldwin

A Good Work



As I'm typing this, I can't help but picture so many of your sweet faces. Anticipation swells within me for our time together studying this letter to the Thessalonians, whose universal theme include love for one another, Christ's second coming and holiness. I'm certain as Paul was penning this, he also pictured the faces of those in this young church that he came to love. Knowing Christ is where faith begins. From there we grow through the essentials of discipleship, Bible study, prayer, worship, Christian community and much more. We learn to set godly priorities, overcome spiritual opposition and witness to others. Yesterday we began our study looking at the unique way in which Paul addressed the Thessalonians, it was more about their eternal position than their earthly location. And just like these Thessalonian believers, being found in Christ is our true identity, it is the key to our lives.

Take a moment to pray and ask God to open your heart and mind so that you might hear from Him today through His Word.

Over the next few days, we will be focusing on some different aspects from 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3. As you copy these verses in the back of your workbook write the word "WE" in capital letters.

There are power, strength and even comfort in the word "we." Our intimacy with God happens with our individual pursuit of Him, but we also possess an intrinsic need to be part of a team. Community helps to foster growth, fuels forward momentum and helps to bring much-needed refinement in our lives.

Summarize this collection of verses in your own vernacular: Ecclesiastes 5:9-12; Proverbs 27:17

Your role is crucial and integral to the strength of the whole. We each have a vital role to play in God's Kingdom agenda, individually and corporately our story is being written. When we unite together under the banner of Christ there will be a rising in fierce strength, grace, skill, and Kingdom impact.

Please fill in	the blanks below from 1 Thessaloniar	ns 1:3 in the NIV translation.	
"We remem	ber before our God and Father your	produced by	
your	prompted by	, and your	inspired by
	in our Lord Jesus Christ."		

Every time I read this, I imagine Paul with a huge grin on his face. His joy just seems to gush out between the lines of this letter. The news from Timothy about these believers was received with abundant

thanksgiving. What a refreshment it must have been to their souls as they talked about the Thessalonian's faith, love and the steadfastness that sprang from their hope in God. I'm also curious what Timothy shared about these people specifically, aren't you? What was it about their lives that was so notable?

Take a moment and think about someone in your life that exhibits these kinds of virtues. Share some specific ways in which you see this lived out:

A true faith in God leads to good works, and His Word tells us that without works faith is dead (James 2:14-26). What is most notable about these virtues is that each is outgoing. Faith is directed towards God, love towards others (both within the church and beyond), and hope towards the future, in particular, the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Similarly, 'faith rests on the past; love works in the present; hope looks to the future.'

A good question to ask ourselves is "What is prompting my work?" How can we know if our work is produced by faith or something else?

Sometimes these words, faith, hope, and love can sound a bit abstract. But here we see that they have concrete practical results. Faith works, love labors and hope endures. Today we are going to give our attention to this idea of "work produced by faith". Let's first consider the word faith in this context. I love this definition for faith by Watchman Nee:

"Faith has two aspects: the objective aspect and the subjective aspect. When we accept the word of God, it becomes both our objective faith and our subjective faith. Objective faith denotes the things we believe, and subjective faith refers to our action of believing. Through such a faith we are regenerated, born of God, and a relationship of life begins between us and God."

The Greek word for *work* in our passage is *ergon*. It is a work of faith that characterize the actions of a genuine believer. It is not the performing of a certain task or the doing of certain good deeds to help others. No, it is our daily activities as believers, the action that is a product of faith. This is Paul's understanding of the work of faith. As he was praying for the Thessalonians, he remembered their acts of faith.

So, what does this look like? How do we do this? The simplest answer I believe is to follow God's lead from His Word, most specifically Jesus' example, the Word made flesh. As we read God's Word, we see how He walks and where He leads. Most people who have been led to complete difficult courses did not initially see themselves as able. But they gathered their courage and followed Jesus by faith.

Please write out Hebrews 11:33 below.

Because people acted in faith, kingdoms were overthrown, wrongdoing was met with justice and God's promises became real. We enter into God's plan and promise in and for our lives by faith. It takes faith to follow where Jesus leads.

"Faith and work. We might see them as estranged. But, in truth, they share a crucial aim: to see the unseen. Nothing new has been made without faith. Nothing unseen has been seen without work. When the force of what we do hit why we do it, we wither or we flourish. We don't want to just examine that collision. We want to live in the intersection where it occurs. To celebrate what flies. And to rethink what falls. To map. To explore. To create. To risk and to fail better. Not just for a nicer 9 to 5. But to serve the city we belong to and love. It comes down to one key truth: work matters. So do it well."

Tim Keller

"So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be..." Romans 12:5-6 The Message

Look up the word prowess in a dictionary. There are two meanings, summarize them below.

I love the double-edged definition of this word. There is exceptional ability, strength, and fearlessness waiting to be realized in your life. It may be hiding, waiting to be encouraged to develop, but
never doubt that it is there. This word carries a measure of wonder and mystery within its letters. We
could have travel prowess, baggage prowess, packing prowess, teaching, and parenting prowess.
This word could also be paired with words like fierce, strategic, innovation, style, and communication. But we don't just want to talk prowess we want to BE prowess. Prowess walks with purpose
and when necessary stealth. Prowess cannot be forced or faked, but it can and should be developed.

God has given within each of us talents and abilities. Our quest is to unearth and hone them. Prowess might say, "I don't know everything, but what I know, I choose to do well." You are called to be a marvelously functioning part of Christ's body, which in my opinion is another expression of prowess! God is inviting one and all to take their positions-everyone in their place, everyone in their strength. There is an enormous gap between what we think we can do and what God calls us to do. Our ideas of what we can do or want to do are trivial; God's ideas for us are grand. May we never be content with living small lives.

What ability, skill, or strength is waiting for you to make it exceptional? What is it that you do well? What is it that makes your heart beat faster? This week ask the Holy Spirit to show you what it looks like to hone the skills He's given you.



Dig Deeper: These three words faith, hope and love are called by scholars the Triad of Faith and are often found in the New Testament, many by Paul himself. Below is a sampling of just a few.

Romans 5:2-5; 1 Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 5:5-6; Colossians 1:4-5



Worship Song Suggestion: Frontiers, Vertical Worship

^{1.} J.B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (1875; Macmillan, 7th ed., 1884), p. 134

Love in Action



"We always thank God for all of you in our prayers. Your actions on behalf of the true faith, your tireless toil of love, and your unfailing, unwavering, unending hope in our Lord Jesus the Anointed before God our Father have put you consistently at the forefront of our thoughts."

- 1 Thessalonians 1:3 The Voice

Yesterday we saw Paul, Silas and Timothy overflow with thanksgiving as they recalled the Thessalonians lives, their work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope. There was no mistaking that these new believers have taken hold of Jesus with tenacity and the result was lives of vivid outpouring and fruitfulness. God was all over their lives and it brought ecstatic joy, an overflow of thanksgiving to Paul and his companions. When lives are lived well it is something to celebrate.

What brings you the greatest joy? Have you received news recently that made you exclaim with thanksgiving?

Whatever is most dear to your heart, what matters most at a soul level is what you will get most excited about. What is your greatest desire? For Paul, Silas and Timothy what they desired most was for this young church to lock onto Jesus and to grow up into maturity. To know that they had committed themselves fully to God and that the outflow of their lives was making Kingdom impact. And when the news came back that in fact, this was the case, they couldn't help but rejoice. Lives that have been transformed by Jesus WILL be visibly noticeable. Take a moment to pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word.

Please write out below the three actions commended by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

Today our focus is going to be on the second of these virtues, "labor of love." What comes to mind when you think about a labor of love? What in your life has been a labor of love?

This word "labor" in Greek is *kopos* and it means intense labor united with trouble. A fatiguing nature of what is done or the magnitude of exertion required. According to verse 3, the labor of love comes after the work of faith. This labor of love is truly a labor; it is not merely an action or some kind of conduct. It involves endeavoring, striving, and working.

The love of the Thessalonian believers expressed itself in hard, strenuous, and exhaustive labor. Paul doesn't share details of what type of labor the Thessalonians undertook. But the word most likely refers to any kind of self-sacrificing labor the believers engaged in as they served both those inside and outside the church. It is evident that their faith and love generated labors that were for the benefit of others, done for pleasure, not reward. For when labor is prompted and given from love it is uniquely Christ-like. In this verse the partnering of love with labor is what is noticed, it's what's highlighted and celebrated.

The Greek word for "love" that is used in this context is *agape*. God's agape love is different from natural human love. All human loves are conditional, two-sided, and self-centered. It is based upon our feelings, our circumstances, and others' responses. To agape something is what we give ourselves completely over to, what we are consumed with, and what we put first in our lives. Setting ourselves aside and genuinely loving (agape) others before or instead of ourselves would not have been possible before the power of the Holy Spirit became ours. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, this kind of supernatural love for others is impossible. In general, people are functioning only on the natural and human love. And even with Christians who are unwilling to lay down their wills and their lives, who are not willing to love God first, and who are not willing to be open vessels, this kind of unconditional love for others is also an impossibility. It's only because Jesus died for us that God's agape love can be manifested and given to us. And it's only when we die to our self-life that God's unconditional love can be manifested and given to others through us. And it was for this very love that the Thessalonians exhibited through their labor that Paul and his companions were thankful.

How do we know when our labor is prompted by love? What are warning signs when this is out of whack?

The night before Jesus is to give his life on the cross, he shares with his disciples some final last words. He gives them a "new" commandment. What is this commandment? Why a new commandment?

Please write out John 13:34 below.

In the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18) we are told to "love our neighbor as ourselves." Why does Jesus now in the New Testament call this a new commandment? The explanation is that only since God had given us the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit at our new birth, have we had the authority and the power within us to truly set our will and our lives aside and love (agape) our neighbor as ourselves. Our standard is Christ's love for us.

So how do we actively live out this agape kind of love? I believe we can find the key back in Jesus' last instructions to his disciples.

A living, vibrant union with Christ, just as a branch receives its life from the vine, is absolutely necessary for living fruitful lives and to love in the way of agape. Just as a branch out of contact with the vine is lifeless, so will our lives also be apart from Christ.

Please fill in the blanks from John 17:26 NIV

"I have made you known to them, and will co	ontinue to make you known in order that the
you have for me may be	and that I myself may be
"	

The love that we are asked to live out is God's love operating in and through us. And the way in which this is made possible is by our remaining connected to the vine, Jesus Himself. Deeds of real love (deeds of righteousness as Scripture calls them) are ones that God motivates in our hearts. Then out of obedience, we trust and allow Him to perform them in our lives. These aren't deeds we do out of duty to earn the other person's love, but simply deeds we do out of the natural outflow of God's life within our soul. They're not actions that are contrived, worked at, or planned; they are actions that are a result of loving God, of being in fellowship with Him, and of being an open vessel.

Recently I came across a perfect analogy of God's love contrasted to human love. It spoke of our need to continually be filled with God's never-ending love. It also spoke of human love, which is always in constant short supply because it's dependent upon our own thoughts and feelings, the others' responses, and our circumstances.

"It is a common sight in the mid-west to see farms with irrigation channels that flood and irrigate the fields. Irrigation channels are channels for the flood waters to flow through. The flood waters are stored somewhere far away from the field and when the channels are open, the flood waters just pour through them. The flood waters are essential because they bring life and growth to the fields. There are also plain ditches on farms and often have water in them because of the rain. These plain ditches, however, can become stagnant pools of water filled with debris; thus, these ditches cannot be used for irrigation.

Water in the farmer's plain ditches is like human love in man. It is in short supply and useful only to the ditch that it is in. Not only is there too little water in it, but it often becomes stagnant and polluted. Often these ditches are blocked with other foreign matter or with rocks and weeds. When a neighbor needs water, he certainly won't benefit much from the water in these ditches. The irrigation channels, however, are different and very much like God's love. The farmer who wants to share his water with his neighbor needs only to open the irrigation channel and let the flood water pour through. The farmer cannot take credit for the water as it came from the source far away. But as the farmer is willing, and leaves his irrigation channel open, the neighbor can get all the flood water he needs."

How did Jesus love us? He died for us! He gave up everything for us. He gave up his rights. His will, His desires, His life-everything. This is God's model for each of us to follow. Are you willing to choose to relinquish your life, to die to yourself, so that God's love can be released through you to those He has called you to love?

Take some time to write out a prayer to God expressing your thanksgiving for His unconditional, everflowing love to you. And ask Him to increase His love within you so that you might be that channel of living water to others.



Worship Song Suggestion: Nobody Loves Me Like You, Chris Tomlin



Today we conclude our time in 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

Open up your Bible and read through our section of verses to refresh your memory. But first, take a moment to pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word.

We've moved from the work of faith and the labor of love and now we go on to the endurance of hope. Hope is the source of endurance. In family life, work life and church life we all need endurance. We must be trained, educated, first to work, then to labor, and eventually to endure. Let's look at a definition for endurance: the fact or power of enduring an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving way. To withstand hardship or adversity. Steadfastness, constancy. Specifically, in this context, the Greek word for endurance is *hypomonē* and is 'characteristic of someone who is unmoved from deliberate purpose and loyalty to faith by even the greatest trials and suffering.'

Can you think of something in your life that has required or is requiring endurance?

In verse 3 Paul speaks of the "endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (NIV). Hope is the source of endurance, and this endurance rests squarely on Christ. Paul had become greatly concerned for the believers in Thessalonica because of the persecution they were enduring externally as well as internally (**Dig Deeper:** 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5; 2:14) But this young church had shown tenacious endurance in the face of extreme opposition and hostility. The source of this perseverance was not some inner resolve or personal strength but their hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. 'It was not some vague expectation about a better future but rather a solid confidence rooted in expectation of Christ's coming. This was the strong foundation that gave the Thessalonians the power to endure and persevere in the face of the tremendous hostility leveled against them.'2

An experiment was done in the Arizona desert called Biosphere 2. The goal was to create perfect growing conditions for trees, fruits, and vegetables, as well as humans. A huge glass dome was constructed to house an artificial, controlled environment with purified air and water, healthy soil, and filtered light. For many months at a time, people lived in the biodome and everything seemed to be going well, with one exception. When the trees would get to a certain height, they would topple over. It baffled scientists until they realized they forgot to include the natural element of wind. Trees need wind to blow against them because it causes their root systems to grow deeper, which supports the tree as it grows taller. Who among us doesn't long for a perfect growing environment for ourselves, with no disruptions from outside influences? So often we attempt to create a controlled environment, striving to avoid any form of adversity or challenge. Then when we are confronted with hardship, the normal tendency is to find the quickest route of escape-choosing rather the path of least resistance. However, what if our trials and challenges were working for us rather than against us?

What does God's Word tell us about trials and hardship in James 1:2-4? What is the end result?

If trees could talk, would we hear them complaining whenever the wind blew against them? When you carefully consider how a tree gracefully bends and sways when the wind blows against it you will notice it does not stand rigid, resisting the flow of energy. It does not push back. The tree accepts the strong wind as a gift that helps it grow stronger while its roots dig deeper. If we allow the winds of adversity to work for us rather than against us, God can use the adversity to develop our character and deepen our spiritual roots. When our roots grow deep, we can remain standing. Just as the trees which grew in the biodome toppled easily once they reached a certain height, likewise, without a strong foundation of godly character, we too can experience a great fall. Outward pressure is always an opportunity to be inwardly transformed.

With this consideration look up what the apostle Paul had to say on the matter in Romans 5:1-5. What do these verses say about endurance and hope?

Our hope isn't about just being positive or looking on the bright side. Our hope and assurance is based on God's love, and remembering that He takes seriously our suffering. He is our personal redeemer, and desires an intimate relationship with us. In suffering we enter the depths, we are at the heart of things; we are near to where Christ was on the cross.

In the space below please read Psalm 130, and write out verses 5-6 below.

The words wait and watch are at the center of this Psalm. This is more of a description, than a procedure for participation. The words wait and hope are connected in the image of the watchman waiting through the night for the dawn. A watchman doesn't do much, nothing to influence or control: he is a watchman. He knows the dawn is coming; there are no doubts concerning that.

Throughout this psalm, the character of God inspires the psalmist's hope. What is it about God's character that maintains your hope?

Reflect on a time when the Lord fulfilled your hopes. How did the experience strengthen your relationship with him?
What are you waiting and watching in your spiritual life?
I have this quote by Charles Surgeon on a Post-it next to my computer. It gives good perspective on the benefit of those unavoidable challenges and difficulties that arise. "Trials teach us what we are; they dig up the soil and let us see what we are made of." Trials are meant to be our teachers, revealing our true condition. When we encounter trials, we have the choice of what kind of student we want to be. Despite my imperfections, I want to do life well. Trials position us to grow more Christlike and therefore unshakeable. They clear the ground and remove what impedes future growth. These encounters serve to refine and prepare us for future potential.
"My fellow believers, when it seems as though you are facing nothing but difficulties see it as an invaluable opportunity to experience the greatest joy that you can! For you know that when your faith is tested it stirs up power within you to endure all things. And then as your endurance grows even stronger it will release perfection into every part of your being until there is nothing missing and nothing lacking." - James 1:2-4 The Passion Translation

Trials are indeed teachers, what type of student will you be? Take some time right now and write out a test or trial that you are enduring. Bring it before the Lord and ask Him to help you endure it with hope.



Worship Song Suggestion: Water to Wine, Hillsong; Be Still, Hillsong

- 1. Strong's definition hypomon, Blue Letter Bible
- 2. Gene L. Green, The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters to the Thessalonians, William
- B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan] p. 91

Chosen For More



It is truly remarkable that in such a short period of time since the Thessalonians had heard and responded to the gospel their lives displayed strong evidence of that fact. Paul was confident that these believers were truly among the chosen because of the unmistakable result of the new life that had become so apparent.

The impact of their lives didn't originate from human strength or willpower, but by the infusion of the very Spirit of Jesus. It was then carried out in sacrificial love first to their Savior and then towards others. Today we unpack our last verse for this week. But first please take a moment to pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Tell God that you desire to encounter Him profoundly today and that whatever He asks of you, your answer is a resounding "yes!"

Please hand write 1 Thessalonians 4 in the back of this book. What did Paul say about the Thessalonians this verse?

Paul was convinced that God had chosen the brothers and sisters in Thessalonica because of the way the gospel came to them (as explained in the following verse), and because of the manner in which they received it. The fact that the Thessalonians had been selected by God was manifested by their reaction to the gospel.

If someone were to ask you how you knew you are loved and chosen by God how would you respond?

Fill in the blanks below from Ephesians 1:4-5 NIV

"For he	us in him before	the creation of the world to be	holy and blameless
in his sight. In	he	us to be adopted	as his sons through
Jesus Christ, in accorda	ance with his	and	"

The driving force behind our being chosen by God is love. It is not based on human effort or merit but instead on God's decision and initiative all rooted solely in his love in "accordance with his pleasure and will." Take a moment to ponder this thought, what does that knowledge stir within you?

The Greek word used here for chosen is *eklog*, meaning: the act of picking out, choosing, divine selection, election. One of the first places this word is used in the New Testament is in Acts at the conversion of Paul.

Please read Acts 9:1-16. How did the Lord refer to Paul in v.15?

In this one verse Jesus tells Ananias that He has chosen Paul to be used as an instrument of God for His Kingdom purposes. But also implied in this statement is that Paul has been chosen to be brought into the family of God. Choosing and calling go hand and hand. One does not come without the other. This statement isn't only true for Paul, we have the exact same charge given to us.

There are times when I read the Scriptures and I wish the curtain could be pulled back just enough to see the different interactions, the expressions on their faces, and hear the tones and inflections in their voices. This is one of those times. I am trying to imagine Paul, hearing this news and being overwhelmed at the thought. That he, a persecutor of Christians, who had recently just stood by and watched the brutal stoning of Stephan (Acts 7:54-8:1) is now being called and "chosen" by the Lord Jesus. To be brought into a personal relationship with God and to do work for the Kingdom that would be unprecedented. Do you think Paul wrestled with that thought? How could he, this tormentor of Christians be chosen to make a positive impact for the very thing he was fighting against? How easy would it be for him to disqualify himself because of his past?

We are really good at pleading inadequacy or even disqualifying ourselves in order to avoid stepping into all God has purposed for us to do. What reasons do you use to resist God's call on your life?

It's easier to stay in the middle of the crowd, and relax in the embracing arms of the familiar. It's easier, but not better. Comfortable but not significant. Effortless, but not fulfilling. God has called you to a life of purpose far beyond what you think yourself capable of living and has promised you adequate strength to fulfill your destiny. What God has "chosen" you to do or be might not seem as important as Paul's call, but God has a unique and original adventure for each of us. Just days before Paul was to give his life to the sword, he wrote his beloved Timothy a letter of encouragement and last instructions. Just try to imagine Paul, this man of God at the end of his life, pouring out his heart as ink on a page.

Please read 2 Timothy 4:1-8 (in the ESV version if you are able), and write out verse 5 below.

Paul told Timothy "fulfill your ministry." The New Testament church knew nothing of the boundaries and limitations that we put on this thing we call ministry today. It would not have been vocations, it would have been for every single believer in Christ, and was planned for from the very foundation of the world. Assigned according to Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." These 'good works' that you are meant to accomplish have been determined in advance. Before time began, there was already the plan for your life. And you will never have any satisfaction in your life until you are on that track, because it was precisely what you were created to do. Every single one of us has a very vivid, very specific outpouring of ministry we were placed on this planet to accomplish. If you desire to know true fulfillment, then it will mean fulfilling your ministry.

So, what does it mean and what does it take to fulfill your ministry? Scores of books have been written on this subject, but the simplest answer to this question in my humble opinion is this:

Obedience. More specifically obedience to the Holy Spirit's prompting.

Promptings come with varying degrees of sacrifice. It might be as simple as getting up while it's still dark to spend time with God. In that moment you have a decision, 'will I get out of my warm and cozy bed and sacrifice sleep for time with Him?' Or what about a prompting to keep silent when we want to make a point, justify ourselves somehow? Or if when you're out and about and pass by a homeless person and God prompts you to stop and pray for them or provide for them somehow? Maybe it's giving sacrificially in either your finances, possessions or time? Or being bold enough to share the gospel?

You were positioned in your exact generation, with your exact background, in the exact part of the world where you have been positioned and where you have been raised. Your ministry is simply doing the work that God has given you to do that He placed you on this planet to fulfill. When you chose to press into this idea of daily obedience to the Holy Spirit's prompting you will without question find your calling and purpose. As you daily spend time in the Father's presence, on your knees and in His Word, you will *not* miss your calling.

It's impossible.

What would this look like for you today? What is God prompting you to do? Are you willing to say "yes?"



Worship Song Suggestion: With Everything, Hillsong; The Voyage, Amanda Cook



introduction

Becoming the Message

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath

This week is a fascinating journey into how we influence others with the message of Jesus.

Here is the simple formula to understand how Paul spread the gospel before our fast-paced world of messaging

(A messenger)+(the gospel message)+(The Holy Spirit) +(imitation)+ modeling

= a new messenger who rings out the message

So let's enter the fascinating world of messengers and messages. In ancient times, the only way to get a personal message to someone was through a direct contact with a messenger. This direct communication required a significant amount of effort, especially if there was travel involved. In our day and age, we have the world at our fingertips through social media, computers and even more text capacity. It's not that hard to get a personal message to a friend. As a matter of fact, we are bombarded on a daily basis by messages!

Check out these statistics:

-Americans sent 1.5 trillion text messages in 2017.

(Telecompetitor.com)

-The average consumer sends 72 messages per day (including app-to-app messaging). (Twilio)

List what's your favorite message to receive during a day?

Here's the reason why this lesson is so important to us today. Everyone is a messenger who sends and receives messages.

Have you ever stopped to think what kind of a message you are sending those around you?

Can you recall a person who sent you a message(either spoken or written) that encouraged you in your faith?

Write down this experience:

Your life is incredibly valuable as a message to the world for Jesus. Your influence and ability to speak, write, and even text can be used by God to share His good news with others.

This week let's explore how the message of Jesus spread before cell phones and computers. Let's see how the Thessalonians were impacted by a messenger, how they received the message and then spread the message everywhere.

(A Messenger) +(the Gospel)

Life changing messages must have the gospel as the main theme. Paul desired his message to activate the Thessalonians. Paul knew his sole message needed to be the gospel or good news of Jesus. Paul did not come to the Thessalonians to promote his own agenda or use flashy tactics to get their attention. Paul was passionate about the gospel spreading as a direct result of obedience to Jesus.

Look up Mark 16:15: What command did Jesus give?

At the heart of the great commission from Jesus, we were called to go into the world and share his message of love with others. Charles Spurgeon said, "There are some preachers who cannot or do not preach about the blood of Jesus Christ, and I have one thing to say to you concerning them: Never go to hear them! Never listen to them!"

From what you have learned so far in this Bible Study, was the message of Paul's life the gospel of Jesus?
More importantly, are you a messenger of the gospel of Jesus to others?

day 1

The Message Arrives

Messages that change lives have the power of the Holy Spirit

1 Thessalonians 1:5 - 10 (NIV)

Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath

Prayer:

"God, I come to you today and ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to indwell my life. Help me live with great conviction in the truth of your word and as a witness to others. Oh Lord, I confess that I am weak in so many areas but by the power of your Holy Spirit you can make me a strong witness. May I walk in the ways you have planned for me and turn from my own selfish ways. Make me your messenger!"

+(The Holy Spirit)

How can we know for sure that a messenger is from the Lord or that his message is authentic? This week we will discover the signs of a divine message that can impact lives. We will also see the importance of watching the life of the messenger as he lives among us.

The website Compelling Truth wrote:

"The power of the Holy Spirit is literally the power of God, the ability to act and influence is infinite, unlimited, and eternal. In this way, the power of the Holy Spirit is different from any other kind of power.

The Apostle Paul gave all the credit and glory to the Spirit, whose power enabled his message to pierce the hearts of sinful men and bring them to salvation. He knew it was not his apologetics, hermeneutics, or persuasive ability that brought people to Christ:"

Look up 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 and write what Paul says about his message and why he shared it in certain ways
It's the dynamite power of the Holy Spirit that equips believers to become messengers and to send effective messages through our unique roles in the church. The Holy Spirit empowers believers in different ways to live among others and to serve.
Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.
List the gifts for the work of the Holy Spirit in ministry to others?
Does one person have all the gifts?
Paul mentions the way "we" lived among you. Why do you think it's so important to have a spiritual community when we try to convey a message to others?
Define the word Conviction:
Part of this definition implies a court of law or a trial to discover truth or error from evidence. Define the word Witness:
Decid Acts 4.0 Wheel house are before any order as to other 20
Read Acts 1:8: What happens before we can witness to others?
It's evident that God must give us the Spirit's power to become a witness to others.

How do you explain the connection between becoming a witness, sharing the gospel and developing deep conviction in others?



If you could write one letter for your family and friends to have forever, what message would it be? What would you want to say?

You became imitators!



1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 (NIV)

Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath

Prayer:

Lord Help me to be an imitator of you in my life. Help me to act as though you dearly love me and therefore I can love others. Let me look to You for my source of love and not desperately seek it from others. Fill me so I can pour your love into others hearts.

Imitation is mimicking or copying a behavior. Imitation is one of the most powerful learning tools in the development of a child. Believe it or not, infants develop in relation to the amount of imitation used by their parents. Imitation helps a child learn patterns of behaviors:

In speech and language

In thoughts

In actions and habits

In personality development

A careful mother will be sure to show her child how to do things, even as a baby. The amount of verbal interaction and careful assistance she provides increases the ability to achieve developmental milestones. Imitation can be as simple as letting a child watch you do a task and then asking them to imitate you. Imitation can be an intentional repetition of a specific activity.

Think about your own family. Have you ever caught yourself saying, "I am becoming my mother! "Have you ever used words, phrases or gestures from your parents?

Some of the things I learned in my family of origin are wonderful things to imitate. If I am ultimately God's child, some things will need to change.

Paul's time with the Thessalonians incorporated this developmental principle for young believers. Not only did they need to hear a message empowered by the Holy Spirit but they needed a time of imitation of that message. Paul spent time in a relationship with the young believers to make sure they knew how to live out the gospel of Jesus in every day acts of love for those around them.

Key Point: Every Believer needs a time of imitation to help them develop into maturity. In this passage, we see the first signs of how the Thessalonians responded to the message of Paul. There are three specific things that happened: They became imitators, they welcomed the message and they had joy in suffering from the Holy Spirit.

Imitators

Has a person ever given you a time of spiritual imitation or discipleship?

Ephesians 5:1 says in the New Living Translation:

"Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children."

When are we to imitate God?

How can we imitate God's love to others?

Here are a few characteristics of dearly loved children:

- They trust the parent who has invested in their lives.
- They understand how to give and receive love because it was demonstrated for them.
- They know they will receive comfort when they are experiencing a hard time.
- They do not fear rejection when they have a need.
- They are confident to ask for help because they know their parent loves them.
- They are secure because they know nothing can separate them from their parent's love

Which of these characteristics best describes your child-like faith in God? Which one of these is hard for you to accept?

Read 1 Corinthians 13: 4-13

Write down some of the characteristics of love we are to imitate

Read Luke 6:33- what are we to imitate in this verse

Read Ephesians 4:32- what are we to imitate in this verse

They welcomed the message - Logon

Strong's Concordance is a reference tool that helps us with translations of Hebrew and Greek words in scripture. It helps us understand the exact meaning of a word in a passage and then allows cross-reference of other verses in the bible where that exact word is used.

The word "message" in this verse is translated into Greek as *logon* as noted in the Strong's Concordance. If we look up the reference in Strong's Concordance as referenced in BibleHub.com we will find this definition:

From *lego*; something said; by implication, a topic, also reasoning or motive; by extension, a computation; especially, the Divine Expression.

Notice these two references for the word Logon

1 Thessalonians:1:6;

"You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word (logon) in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit."

I Thessalonians 2:13;

"For this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you received the word (logon) of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word (logon) of men, but for what it really is, the word (logon) of God,"

Compare and contrast these two verses.

What do you see that is significant?

Strong's Concordance can help you do your own biblical research at the touch of a computer screen. Try a little bit of online research yourself.

Google the word LOGON used for "Message" (3056), in the Strong's Concordance online and try to find other verses using this same word.

List a few here-

What else do you learn about Logon from finding other verses with the same word?

Joy

We have all heard the difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is a feeling dependent on certain circumstances. Joy only comes from God and is not dependent on circumstances. Joy is an intentional focus on faith of God.

Write Philippians 4:4

Look up Philippians 2:14-15

Desiring God wrote this interesting article on the connection of joy in a believer's life: "Paul tells us not to grumble, not to murmur in a setting where there is crookedness and darkness and evil. You can think of a dozen circumstances in your life where it just feels so right and natural to complain and murmur and grumble. And Paul says: Don't go there. So, what is the opposite of grumbling? Contentment, peace, and joy. This is a reverse command to do all things with joy, even in circumstances where it would most likely be natural to grumble."

What makes you happy in your life?

What tempts you to grumble or complain?

What keeps you from complaining?

When have you had joy in a situation that did not make you happy?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:17- Why can we have joy in the midst of a trial?

Read Psalm 34:19 - What promise do we have in suffering?

Journal Prompt

What do you think it looked like in ancient times to have joy in the midst of suffering? How do you think they are similar or different to our ability to experience joy in suffering today?



1 Thessalonians 1:7-10

Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath

Prayer:

Lord, as I study being a model, will you increase my ability to be an example to others by the power of your spirit? Lord help me to step up into maturity for others who are younger in faith. Give me opportunities to be the example, worthy to be associated with you, Jesus.

Amen

+(The model)

The Thessalonians, who were once the imitators of Paul, have now become the model to their surrounding regions. A model is defined by Google's online dictionary as a three-dimensional representation of a person or thing or of a proposed structure, typically on a smaller scale than the original, a system or thing used as an example to follow or imitate.

In order to be a model, you must possess all the necessary components of a complete design. In other words, a child could not be a model because they still require many stages of development in order to function on an adult level. Imagine a Lego set without an instructional model? It would be impossible or a difficult guessing game to build a Lego set without a model structure or basic image.

Unlike a Lego set, family modeling is typically the responsibility of a parent to a child. A parent must become a representation of adulthood. Modeling in a family emphasizes the importance of consistent actions and behaviors over words of instruction. Here is more information on how modeling plays into the family structure.

Key Point: Be the Example you want others to learn

David Popenoe, PhD, Professor of Sociology writes, "(Modeling) is one of the most fundamental dimensions of raising a moral, pro-social child. Children pay more attention to what an adult does then to what an adult merely says.

Most important of all, for children to learn values from their parents through modeling, the parents must have a regular, active and continuing presence in the lives of their children.

Similar to our biological family, the family of God requires mature adults or believers to model maturity to younger believers in the faith. A mature believer is not dependent upon chronological age but the character building actions of the person. Young believers, just like children, require a consistent presence of someone farther along in their faith. They need to see Christianity in action in everyday life.

The following is an excerpt from an article written on Bible.org from J. Hampton Keathley,"A Mature Christian is someone who is a model, a pacesetter, someone who influences others in positive ways according to biblical standards. Modeling Christian virtues, virtues of true spirituality, is crucial to effective ministry in the world. Without biblical and godly models we are cast into a restless sea that can only toss up refuse and mud. Students, sons, daughters, and the flock tend to emulate their leaders, parents, guardians, teachers or heroes. The tendency is for us to shy away from this responsibility and reality, but in order to be mature and a leaders one must accept this as a reality of leadership."

Read Luke 6:40- write this verse and describe this modeling analogy

Is it hard for you to see yourself as a model or a mature believer?

There is a responsibility to become a messenger for Christ. Many of us coming to Bible study are comfortable answering questions, showing up in groups of women and being lifetime learners.

Do we apply what we are learning through modeling to others? The true mark of maturity will be when we show up for others in relationships and start leading by example. We must place a high value on the power of our influence and the people that live with us.

Do we value our time spent on relationships around us as the precious gift of modeling the example of love for Jesus? Are we stepping up to be an example in our everyday life?

How comfortable would we be if someone followed us around every day and tried to learn how to be a Christian? I don't know about you, but sometimes it's the most difficult to follow Christ in my own home. When I feel unloved or unappreciated by my own family, I am often tempted to justify an outburst of unpleasantness or a full on pity party. (Everyone invited!)

However, as a Christian, I am most responsible for the everyday example in my home, behind closed doors. That doesn't mean that I will always do the right thing, but it is a sober reminder that my behavior ALWAYS matters to the Lord. ALWAYS. I am not called to stay comfortable but to grow into maturity.

Can you list some easy ways for you to lead by example in your life?

Conversely, Can you list some ways you struggle in Christian maturity?

Or maybe even do the exact opposite of the example you desire..

The reality remains that we are always modeling behavior. We have repentance through prayer when we feel convicted in this area. We can ask God to increase our ability to be an example in our own homes and in the world.

Read Matthew 7:7

What assurance does this verse offer us in our quest to maturity?

It's pretty amazing that the young believers have matured into model Christians.

Let's use our Bible research skills to look up the word used for "model" in the passage.

Strong's Greek Concordance: "an example" (typon)

In Strong's Concordance the word is "tupos": a figure, model, type

Definition: typically

Usage: (originally: the mark of a blow, then a stamp struck by a die), (a) a figure; a copy, image, (b) a pattern, model, (c) a type, prefiguring something or somebody.

Let's try to learn more about the word used for "example" in other scriptures.

By going online to Biblehub.com, you can click on the number 5179 and see other references for this word.

To practice cross-referencing a Greek word, I have listed verses that use the same Greek word Tupos.

Read these verses and notice the use:

1 Corinthians 10:6

"Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did."

According to this verse, what is the purpose of this example?
Titus 2:7
"In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness"
According to this verse, What is the purpose of this example?
In an online article called the Power of Example, Wayne Jackson wrote
"Jesus was such a marvelous pattern in a great variety of ways. He was an example of righteous living; he never yielded to sin (Hebrews. 4:15). He delighted in doing his Father's will (Psalms. 40:8) and pursued that course with diligence (John. 8:29). The Lord was a fitting example in serving (John 13:15) and in suffering (1 Peter. 2:21).
There is a vivid commentary on the influence of Christ in the book of Acts. We are told that the Jewish rulers, in observing Peter and John, "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus' (Acts 4:13). What a commentary on the Savior!
No one can argue with a good example; it is simply there! "
Look up these verses and list what spiritual modeling or examples look like in life-
I Timothy 4:12
Titus 2:6-7
Colossians 3:16
Micah 6:8

Spiritual maturity was being demonstrated in the Thessalonian believers.

The word" example" can also mean a physical 3 dimensional representation of significance.



Read the following verse that uses the same Greek word for example and calls it nail marks:

John 20:25 -so the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the <u>nail marks</u> in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Compare the same Greek word used in John for "nail marks" and the use of the word "example" related to believers.

How do you think these are connected in meaning and how can you apply this to your life for our need of examples?

- 1. https://parenthood.library.wisc.edu/Popenoe/Popenoe-Modeling.htm
- 2. https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/229-power-of-example-the
- 3. https://bible.org/seriespage/mark-1-example-others-imitate



1 Thessalonians 1:8

Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath

Prayer:

Lord, help me to be a message that rings out everywhere to the world. Thank you for letting the word of Jesus take root in my own life. Help me to spread the message and be a woman of faith.

Today is an important day to see a few translations of verse 8:

1 Thessalonians 1:8 (ESV) "For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere so that we need not say anything."

1 Thessalonians 1:8 (Weymount NT) "For it was not only from you that the Master's Message sounded forth throughout Macedonia and Greece; but everywhere your faith in God has become known so that it is unnecessary for us to say anything about it."

1 Thessalonians 1:8 (God's Word Translation) "From you the Lord's word has spread out not only through the province of Macedonia and Greece but also to people everywhere who have heard about your faith in God. We don't need to say a thing about it."

What exactly is the message that rang out everywhere? It is called the word of the Lord, the Master's Message, the Lord's word?

What are they all referring to?

Well, by now, you are able to look up a few words in Greek using Strong's Concordance. In this passage of scripture today we can identify the Greek word for *Message*:

Message: Logos

Strong's Greek 3056: From lego; something said; by implication, a topic, also reasoning or motive; by extension, a computation; especially, the Divine Expression.

A new messenger that rings out the message

Notice: This is the same Greek word used to describe the message that the Thessalonians received and it's the same word used to describe the message that rang out of their hearts to others! How incredible! The message was successfully planted in the hearts of the Thessalonian believers, and the same message was spread to others; Paul successfully completed the equation!

(A messenger)+(a gospel message)+(The Holy spirit) +(imitation)+ modeling = a new messenger who rings out the message

Let's look at what it takes for a message or LOGOS to be planted and spread.

Turn to Mark 4:1-20

This is the parable of the sower. I found this passage using the Strong's listing of the word LO-GOS #3056. It is an excellent example of many verses describing what happens to the logos in the hearts of people.

Read the parable of planting from Jesus in the literal description of planting

Mark 4:4-8?

"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants so that they did not bear grain. Still, other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

- 1. Describe the first Soil
- 2. Describe the second soil
- 3. Describe the third soil
- 4. Describe the fourth soil

It is not until Mark 4:14 that the word LOGO is used: however now every reference to the seed being sown is translated to LOGOS. We soon discover that Jesus was referring to the word of the Lord, the Master's Message, the Lord's word as a seed being sown into the soil of man's heart. Look at Mark 4:14: What is sown? Read Mark 4:15 What happens to the LOGOs or in this reference and what does it symbolize? Read Mark 4:16 What happens to the LOGOS in this verse and what does it signify? In Mark 4:17 we see something occur that affects the LOGOS? What happens and how does this relate to the Thessalonians? Were they described by this soil? How was Jesus prophetic in this parable when discussing what would happen as HIs LO-GOS spread in the world? In Mark 4:18 - 19 we see the last negative issue for soil - What happened to this LOGOS? Define the word unfruitful? Why do you think unfruitfulness is uniquely tied to this soil and its effect on the LOGOS? In Day Three we learned that the Thessalonians became a model, how did they avoid this soil?

Lastly, what happens to the fourth soil?

How is this soil like the Thessalonians and how does this apply to today's message of the word LOGOS?

Which soil most describes your life?

Our Final use of the word LOGOS is in the book of John

Read John 1:1-2

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning"

Here is some commentary from RC Sproul on the use of LOGOS in John.

RC Sproul wrote, (1)

"In Greek philosophy, the logos remains an impersonal force, a lifeless and abstract philosophical concept that is a necessary postulate for the cause of order and purpose in the universe. In Hebrew thought, the Logos is personal. He indeed has the power of unity, coherence, and purpose, but the distinctive point is that the biblical Logos is a He, not an it.

All attempts to translate the word Logos have suffered from some degree of inadequacy. No English word is able to capture the fullness of John's Logos when he declared that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Attempts have been made by philosophers to translate Logos as logic, act, or deed—all of which are inadequate definitions.

God's Logos does include action. The Logos is the eternal Word in action. But it is no irrational action or sheer expression of feeling. It is the divine Actor, acting in creation and redemption in a coherent way, who is announced in John's Gospel.

That the Word became flesh and dwelt among us is the startling conclusion of John's prologue. The cosmic Christ enters our humanity. It is the supreme moment of visitation of the eternal with the temporal, the infinite with the finite, the unconditioned with the conditioned."

Who or what is the word LOGOS really referring to in John?



What is the most important thing you have learned this week?

1. https://www.christianity.com/jesus/is-jesus-god/names-of-jesus/how-is-jesus-the-logos-the-word.html

You are the Messenger!



1 Thessalonians 1:7

Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath

Prayer:

Dear God,

In this final day of study, help me to understand how you desire me to live a transformed life. What is it that I must change and what is essential for me to learn. I ask that you give me this wisdom that I might repent and find the grace of the Holy Spirit to restore a right spirit in me. Let my life become the message of your love and your transformational power for anyone. Oh Lord, I thank you in advance for what you can do in and through me as I willingly submit to you- Amen

A living example of the transformed life

Today, unlike any other day, I thought I would give you the chance to design your own Bible lesson. We have studied the messenger, Paul, arriving with the gospel message of LOGOS. Part of becoming the message focused on the process of developing from an imitator to a model, I thought it would be incredibly important for us to practice this principle. Many of you have spent years in Bible Study, studying the LOGOS - You have studied the Bible as the word of God, you know Jesus who is the LOGOS in the flesh, you have lead others from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. It's time for us to begin to process content for ourselves and learn to develop our own method of researching the Bible.

You are the Messenger!

Read 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 (NIV)

"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."



Today is your day to write the message. You are the messenger who is equipped with the right message! So let's practice writing a bible study lesson for today.

Be prepared to share one original insight you learned with your group next week. Don't feel the need to go through every one of these questions with your group, but take this time in your group to share your original thoughts.

For the rest of this lesson, I would like for you to focus on your own life and what God is doing inside of you personally concerning the scripture reading for today. **Take a critical look at verses 9-10.**

What are the critical questions you notice in this verse?

Ex: What does it mean to turn to God from idols? What does it mean to wait on the return of Jesus?

If you were writing today's lesson, what are essential words or phrases would you want women to understand? Write your phrases!

(hint: here are a few examples: You "turned to" God "from idols." To serve the "living" and "true" God To wait for his son from heaven)

Define words or phrases with definitions:

How would you help women discover the meaning of those phrases?

Find other scriptures references with the same word for comparison:

(You can use other commentary or online references)

List verses:

What keywords or phrases or themes do you see in common?

Summarize a key point to your message:

If you were to summarize those thoughts, what key point would you want to share with other women to help them grow?

Teaching tool for the message:

How would you design a learning experience for women to understand this point fully? How could you teach someone else by what you learned?

Share your message!

Now personalize your key point to your own life testimony. How has the key point applied to you in the past? Give a personal example of a story in your life that you would be willing to share with other women (even if it doesn't make you look good or is something hard you learned).

Everyone is a creative messenger so create your own message!

The goal of being a messenger is to serve the Lord by finding original ways to express your faith and share the LOGOS of Jesus. You don't have to feel locked into one way! There is not a "one size fits all" way to share Jesus with people.

Some of us share the message as we model everyday acts of kindness.

Some of us share the message with hospitality

Some share the message of Jesus by serving to set up the room each week for Bible study.

Every woman in women's ministry is a messenger, in her own unique way.

So to end this week, think of a creative way you are called to share the message of Jesus.

Is it through actions
Is it through giving
Is it through service
It is it through words
It is through hospitality
Is it through worship

Is it through friendship

Is it through writing

Is it through email, letters or texts

Is it through missions work

Is it through your job

List your best way to be a message for Jesus

I pray you are blessed, as you have become the message of Jesus Christ.

And here is my final message in a poem for you!

You are the message, your family needs each day.

You have the right message, when others turn the wrong way

You can say the words, others long to hear

You share your faith in kindness, when you wipe away a tear

You live among the people, God called you to embrace

Journal Prompt

with His spirit and His conviction, and the power of His grace

Even without words, your faith undertrials
Will ring out loud, to people for miles

So ladies, become the message

And make today your start

For seed was sown on fertile ground
That multiplied in your heart!

"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." 2 Corinithians 3:2-3



introduction

A Heart Compelled by Love

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NKJV)

"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."

Sweet sisters,

I am so excited about what the Lord has in store for us this week. As I have read and reread this chapter, I have found love written all over the passage. And so for the banner verses over this week's lesson I have chosen 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. As you study this passage I think you will see Paul's ministry was one compelled by love. And, although you may not be in "full time vocational" ministry, I think you will see the love that compelled Paul should be evident in your own heart as well.

One of the ways we gain a better understanding of a passage of scripture is by looking for key words. A key word is a word the author uses repeatedly in a significant way, or a word which cannot be removed from the text without leaving it devoid of meaning. I believe the key word in this passage you will look at this week is LOVE. Although it is not actually written in the text...it is clearly seen in the actions and attitudes of Paul and his co-workers.

As we study this portion of scripture in which Paul defends his character and ministry in Thessalonica, I want you to look carefully at Paul's words and see past those words to his heart. Look for clues as to what motivated this man of God. Look at his passion and focus with regard to his ministry.

This week we will look at Paul as the servant of God, as the preacher of the gospel, as the pastor-shepherd, and as the teacher. And on our final day we will be looking at our own hearts. Each day has a banner verse(s) which I have chosen so as to focus your mind and heart in a specific direction. Spend a moment to read these before beginning your study for the day.

Note: Questions are based on the New American Standard Bible (NAS), unless otherwise stated.

Heart of the Servant of God



2 Corinthians 6:4-7 (NASB)

"in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left."

Dear Sisters,

This week as you focus on chapter 2 verses 1 through 16, you need to remember that the occasion for this chapter was the accusations made against Paul by the enemies of the gospel who claimed he was only out for personal gain. These opponents were probably both unbelieving Jews and Gentiles; both of whom were hostile to the gospel. In this passage Paul reviews his ministry in Thessalonica in order to silence those attacks on the ministry and his character. He did this, not because he was concerned about the Thessalonians' approval, but to protect the work the Lord had accomplished through him and his co-workers.

Today we will be concentrating on verse two, as well as looking into some background passages so that we might gain a better understanding of the text and the apostle Paul himself.

R. Kent Hughes in his commentary on 2 Corinthians writes, "Paul stands alone in history in his record of abuse from others. There is no one like him."1 Look at the banner verse (2 Corinthians 6:4-7) above. It lists three sets of trials the apostle Paul endured. First there were general trials; trials all of us can expect in this life (afflictions, hardships, distresses). Next, there are trials inflicted by others (beatings, imprisonments, tumults). And finally, there are trials he voluntarily accepted as a servant of the Lord (labors, sleeplessness, hunger). In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul goes into more detail regarding these trials.

This leads to the question I want you to consider today: How did Paul, not only endure but triumph in the trials and tribulations he encountered in his ministry? As you read keep this in mind. At the end of today's lesson you will have the opportunity to explore this question more thoroughly.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

COME EXPECTANT: If you would follow on to know the Lord, come at once to the open Bible expecting it to speak to you. Do not come with the notion that it is a thing which you may push around at your convenience. It is more than a thing, it is a voice, a word, the very Word of the living God.2

—A. W. Tozer

Prayer:

Lord God, I come before You with an expectant heart, desiring to hear from You. My goal is not to merely gain knowledge, but to know You in a more intimate way. Help me Lord, to remove all thoughts and concerns that would distract me from clearly hearing You. Open my eyes of understanding and prepare my heart by the power of Your Spirit that I might receive all that You have for me today. Amen.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16. If you have taken on the challenge to write out the passage, go to the back of the book and copy 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 there—making note of the version you use (ESV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, NLT...).

"After we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi" sets the background for their work in Thessalonica. Paul and Silas had been mistreated in Philippi before coming to Thessalonica. From Acts 16 we learn that they had suffered physically when they were beaten with rods and then were thrown into prison with their feet chained (vs. 22-24). That night as a bloody and bruised Paul and Silas sat chained in the prison, they began to sing "hymns of praise to God" and suddenly God's presence showed up. There was an earthquake and they were released from their chains (vs. 25-26). After the earthquake and they were released from their chains, they did not run but spent time sharing the gospel with the jailer (vs. 27-24).



DIG DEEPER: Read Acts 16:12-40 for a detailed account of what took place.

Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown in prison, but they did not allow the chains to shackle their joy.

Has there ever been a time when you have felt shackled by your circumstances, and you responded by praising the Lord? If you have, please share that experience with your group. If you have never responded with praise to your sufferings, consider doing it next time.

Even after this experience in Philippi, Paul writes, "we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition."

Have you ever felt intimidated after experiencing failure or rejection in sharing your faith?

Did you press on or did you succumb to fear?

What can you learn from Paul's example?

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10. Remembering that Paul in our current passage is defending his character and ministry, what do you see happening in Thessalonica that would cause the opponents of the gospel to go on the attack?

"If you cannot refute or attack the message, attack the messenger."

What do you think Paul's opponents hoped to accomplish by attacking him?

The name *Satan* means adversary; he is committed to opposing God and His people, especially when they are zealous to exalt God's glory. Satan often uses the anger of others to try to squelch the newfound joy and zeal of a new believer. There will always be opposition. The enemy will try to get you sidetracked or to give up completely....Even though it is God's will for you to grow strong in faith and to labor to advance His kingdom, God does not remove the opposition. If you respond properly, the opposition will drive you to greater dependence on the Lord and to greater determination to do what He has called you to do. If you yield to the opposition, you will quit the race in discouragement or settle in for a mediocre Christian existence.3 —Steven J. Cole

Paul's enemies might have done what they did for evil, but God can always use it for good. Read the quote from Steven J. Cole. He writes, "if you respond properly...." What do you think a proper response to opposition is?

How do you think responding properly will lead you to a greater dependence on God and a greater determination to do what He has called you to do?



DIG DEEPER: In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul goes into more detail regarding the many trials he endured. If you have the opportunity, take the time to read this passage. You will gain a better appreciation for the apostle Paul. **Write down your thoughts after reading this passage.**

Remember the question you were asked to consider at the beginning of the lesson, "How did Paul, not only endure but triumph in the trials and tribulations he encountered in his ministry?" Read the following scriptures, and highlight or circle any words or phrases that help you answer this question.

Acts 9:15-16 (NASB)

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he (Paul) is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

Romans 5:1-4 (NASB)

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope."

2 Corinthians 4:15-18 (NASB)

"For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

2 Timothy 1:8-9 (NASB)

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."

2 Timothy 2:8-13 (NASB)

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

If we endure, we will also reign with Him;

If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."

2 Timothy 4:16-18 (NASB)

"At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. The Lord

Journal Prompt

will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Hebrews 12:1b-3 (NASB)

"let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

List below what you discover about endurance in the face of opposition and hardships from the day's lesson and the scriptures.

"There are times when nothing holds the heart but a long, long look at Calvary. How very small anything that we are allowed to endure seems beside that Cross.4"

- Amy Carmichael

Think of a time in your life that tested your spiritual, physical or emotional endurance. What kept you going? Did you learn something today that will help you in a future circumstance where you are in need of perseverance? Write down your thoughts. Then close with a prayer thanking Him for all He is teaching you.

3

"Journaling is simply recording thoughts, prayers, notes, lessons, and more. The method is not the issue; deepening my passion for God is the important thing.5"

Heart of the Preacher



1 Corinthians 9:16 (NASB)

"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel."

Dear Sisters,

I hope you were able to get a glimpse of Paul's heart as you worked on yesterday's lesson. In that lesson we looked at the trials Paul faced prior to his coming to Thessalonica. You were asked the question, "How did Paul, not only endure but triumph in the trials and tribulations he encountered?" Below is a list of some possible answers. Did you have any of these in your answer to the question? If you had other ideas, please share them with your small group. Your ideas may be just the encouragement needed by one of your sisters going through a hardship right now.

- he had a clear sense of the holy call on his life
- he knew that what he was doing was what God had called him to do
- he knew he was accomplishing the goal of bringing the gospel to those who needed to hear it
- he saw himself as a prisoner of Christ, not his circumstances
- his focus was on the eternal and not the temporal, thus he saw his trials as "light affliction"
- he knew why he was suffering
- he saw spiritual growth as a result of his suffering
- he leaned on the Lord and had experienced deliverance from suffering
- he knew he was not alone in his suffering
- he had the example of Jesus Christ to follow
- he was doing it all for God's glory
- and, of course he was compelled by Christ's love

Oh, so much in a single day! But we have more to discover today as we focus on verses 2 through 6. In this passage Paul reveals his heart for the ministry. We will see that he was not engaged in ministry for the material benefits, or for personal gain; instead he endured much to proclaim the gospel because he felt burdened to do so. For Paul, this was his very reason for living.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

COME EXPECTANT: "I think a new world will arise out of the religious mists when we approach our Bible with the idea that it is not only a book which was once spoken, but a book which is now speaking.1"

-A. W. Tozer

Prayer:

Lord God, I come before You with an expectant heart, desiring to hear from You. May my ears and heart be attuned to You only. Open my eyes to see the wonderful things in Your Word. Give me a teachable spirit and help me to apply the lessons I learn today as I open Your Word. I hunger to know You more and more. Amen.

As I stated previously, the banner verse(s) are chosen to prepare your minds and hearts for the day's lesson. So before you get into the text, I would like you to look at today's banner verse. I believe it will give you some understanding as to why Paul would never take lightly the gospel message, and why he would not use it for personal gain or alter the message in any way. Paul uses some strong words in this verse. He writes, "for I am under compulsion," and "woe is me if I do not preach the gospel."

What would inspire such strong words from Paul? Look at Acts 9:6, 15-16; Romans 1:14-17; Galatians 1:11-16; and 1 Timothy 1:15 in answering the question.

Read through 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 at least once. Now read today's focus, verses 2-6.

We looked at verse 2 in yesterday's study, and you probably noted that Paul's boldness was "in our God," and was not confidence in himself. This statement that they continued to preach the gospel after the treatment they experienced in Philippi and in the face of new opposition in Thessalonica could be considered his first piece of evidence to support his case against his accusers. As J. Hampton Keathley, III writes, "Men who could sing hymns to God in prison after such insolent and vile treatment for preaching the gospel, but who were still not discouraged from preaching the gospel in such conditions were not likely to be phonies." 2

In verses 3 through 6 Paul will now address the charges brought against him and his co-workers with regard to how they handled the gospel message. Here Paul defends their message, their motive, and their methods in preaching the gospel. His statements include both the negative (what they did not do) and the positive (what they did do).

	First let's look at what they did not do. We can imagine that these negatives express the accusations made against Paul and his co-workers. Write down in the space provided those things they did NOT do, including the verses where you find them.
	Now let's look at those same verses and find what they did do (again write down the verse along with your answer).
	From your lists of negatives and positives describe: The Men
	The Message
	The Motive
	The Method
	Have you ever been accused of something you did not do? How did you feel? How did you respond? What was the result?
, and a second	DIG DEEPER: Write out and memorize 2 Timothy 2:15.

Paul in verse 4 writes, "we have been **approved** by God." In his commentary John MacArthur says this concerning the word translated **approved**: "the perfect tense of the verb *dedokomasmetha* (have been approved) means Paul was tested and found valid, he was given a lasting approval. God had validated and continued to approve Paul's ministry."3

Below is an excerpt from Max Lucado's book *On the Anvil* that describes the functions and tasks of one that has been approved by God:

"Being tested by God reminds us that our function and task is to be about his business, that our purpose is to be an extension of his nature, an ambassador of his throne room, and a proclaimer of his message. We should exit the shop with no question as to why God made us. We know our purpose.4"—Max Lucado

Paul had been approved by God and entrusted with the gospel. How do you think Paul's clear sense of his calling and purpose helped him keep his focus?

Do you have a clear sense of your call and purpose in life? If so, how did you come to that knowledge?

What ministries do you involve yourself in? Why?

What are your motives for involving yourself in ministry?

Why is it important that we live our lives to please God and not people?

Paul was bold in sharing the gospel and encouraged others to do the same, but did you know it is also good to preach the gospel to yourself? Years ago I attended a retreat entitled, *Loving God—Loving Others*. The speaker said the first step in developing a greater love for God and others is to "come to the cross daily," which she defined as "preaching the gospel to yourself."

Although he did not go so far as to say we should preach the gospel to ourselves, David Mathis in his article *Twelve Gospel Passages to Soak In,* does speak of the importance of the gospel in our lives before and after salvation.

Mere truth won't do it. Our souls desperately need the gospel. 'The grace of God in truth' (Colossians 1:6) is the shock that brings a dead soul to life, and the charge that keeps it living. The gospel is the gas that awakens and energizes the human heart, not mere truth — essential as truth is.5 —David Mathis

On the next page is a list of the 12 scripture passages found in David Mathis' article. These short passages get at the heart of the gospel message.

Journal Prompt

Read 1 Corinthians 15:2-4 and any others from the list you have time for. Then write out the gospel message in your own words.

Isaiah 53:4-6

Romans 3:23-24

Romans 4:4-5

1 Corinthians 15:2-4

Galatians 3:13-14

Ephesians 2:4-5

Philippians 2:6-8

Colossians 1:19-20

Colossians 2:13-14

Titus 3:4-7

Hebrews 2:14-17

1 Peter 2:22-25



DIG DEEPER: These short passages would be great for memorization or times of reflection. There are any number of ways you can make use of these verses. You might even use them as a means of "coming to the cross daily" so as to develop a greater love for the Lord.

The Gospel Message in my own words:

Spend a moment to reflect on all you have studied in today's lesson. Consider one thing that stood out to you that you would like to focus on in the next week. It may be a verse(s) you would like to look into or meditate on. It may be a concept you would like to further investigate. It may be something you are convicted to do in response to what you read. Whatever it is, write a prayer below, inviting the Spirit to guide and encourage you in your endeavor.

day 3

Heart of the Pastor-Shepherd

Prayer is "our hearts looking up to God."

— H. A. Ironside

1 Thessalonians 2:8 (NASB)

"Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."

Dear Sisters,

As you did yesterday's lesson I hope you were able to see Paul's heartfelt burden to share the gospel, as well as his faithful handling of that truth. He surely was a man who felt indebted to the gospel, for by it he the foremost of sinners had been saved.

"Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you're not saved yourself, be sure of that!" 1 — Charles Spurgeon

As you look at today's passage you will see how Paul and his co-workers not only shared the gospel, but their lives as well. J. Vernon McGee once said, "Paul's greatest sermon was his life in Thessalonica—not in writing, but in walking; not in exposition, but in experience; not in his profession, but in his practice. He made his point on the streets of Thessalonica." Here in verses 7 through 12 Paul shares that sermon.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

COME EXPECTANT: By reading your Bible with holy anticipation of hearing the living Word, you invite confirmation of the peace you believe you've been sensing within. You open your heart to receive His counsel and to let His guidance illuminate your next steps. You till up fertile soil for Him to plant a pinpointed message in the deepest regions of your being.2 —Priscilla Shirer

Prayer:

"Lord God, I open Your Word with anticipation—expecting to hear from You. I come before You with an open heart and a willing spirit. Help me to put aside the busyness of thoughts that I might hear you clearly. May Your Word work within me—changing me from the inside out. Amen."

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16; then read through verses 7-12 at least once.

David Guzik in his commentary writes, "It has been said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Paul gave both his care and his knowledge to the Thessalonians." In these verses you will get a picture of Paul's care for the Thessalonian believers.

In the banner verse for this lesson Paul writes, "we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives." What do you think was involved in the imparting of their lives?
In verses 7-12 Paul uses the metaphors of a nursing mother and a father. John MacArthur in his commentary suggests that there were any number of metaphors Paul could have chosen—a shepherd, a steward, or a servant for instance. Yet he chose a mother and a father to picture the care he provided the Thessalonian believers. Why do you think he chose these metaphors?
How does Paul describe the mother?
What three words does Paul use to describe their behavior (v. 10)? What do you think this means? Paul uses three words to describe what the father does (v. 11)? Look these words up in a dictionary.
What do you think Paul is trying to get across by using these metaphors?
Following these descriptions, Paul says his goal is that they "would walk in a manner worthy" of God (v. 12). Do you think his conduct was an encouragement to their fulfilling this goal? If so, how?

any of you." Why do you think it was important to Paul that they worked to pay their way?

In verse 9 Paul states he and his co-workers worked "night and day so as not to be a burden to

What does this reveal about Paul and his feelings toward the Thessalonian believers?

Let's consider the saying, "It has been said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." List the ways Paul and his co-workers demonstrated how much they cared for the Thessalonians.

How do you think these actions of Paul and his co-workers provide evidence to refute the accusations brought against them?

Years ago, I did a teaching on 2 Corinthians 6, which I entitled *A Heart Wide Open*. I saw in that chapter, and in the whole book words written by Paul with a father's heart for his children. Paul's words to the Corinthians, "O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open," and "I speak as to children—open wide to us also" (2 Corinthians 6:11, 13) spoke to me of the desire for an intimate, loving relationship.

Read the following scriptures, and hear the heart of Paul for God's people. Highlight, circle or underline any words or phrases that stand out to you.

1 Corinthians 4:14-16 (NLT)

"I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. So I urge you to imitate me."

Galatians 4:19-20 (NASB)

"My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you— but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you."

Philippians 2:12-13 (NASB)

"So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

Philippians 4:1 (NASB)

"Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."

Journal Prompt

Notice that Paul wrote with both encouragements and admonitions, but always with a heart wide open.

I have been blessed to be in Bible study groups where the women, not only shared their answers to the questions, but shared their lives as well. These women were transparent—their hearts were wide open. They generously shared their love.

I hope that has been your experience as well. If you have experienced a transparent relationship with a sister in Christ, send a card or email thanking her for her transparency and love. Maybe you have more than one card to send. If so, get busy!



Spend time being transparent with the Lord. Ask Him to open wide your heart—that you might love Him and others with a deeper love. Write your thoughts and prayers below.

Heart of the Teacher



"I feel Your river of love rushing in, when You open wide my heart."

-Matthew West

Colossians 1:28-29 (NASB)

"We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose, also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."

Sweet Sisters,

Yesterday we saw how Paul, with his heart wide open invested his life into the lives of the Thessalonians. Today we will see the results of his labors in their lives.

I am excited about today's lesson, and I pray you will get as much out of it as I have in putting it together. It's a full lesson, so let's get started.

Today we will be looking at verse 1, and verses 13 through 16 of our passage. You may wonder why I have you looking at verse one on the fourth day as opposed to the first day of our study. Well, the truth of the matter is I have a need for everything to neatly fit together and these last verses were not fitting in until I put them together with the first verse of the chapter. In that first verse Paul writes, "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain." Paul beginning here and throughout the passage has appealed to the knowledge of the Thessalonian believers with words such as "you yourselves know," "as you know," and "you recall." They were in a sense witnesses called to give testimony in his defense against the accusations made about him. These believers knew and could attest to the fact that his work, his words, and his walk were above reproach. But, not only were they his witnesses, they were his evidence—proof that his visit to Thessalonica had not been in vain. And here in these final verses of this passage Paul presents the evidence that they had received the Word of God, and that Word had not come away without performing what it was purposed to do.

13-15 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

COME EXPECTANT: "God loves to communicate with us through His written Word. He wrote Scripture with a purpose, and He intends for us to read it with a purpose—to deepen our passion for Him.1"—Deane Trune

Prayer:

"Lord God, I thank You for Your Word, and for the fact that You desire to speak to us through it. Help me to tune out those things that would distract me from hearing Your voice. May my heart be open to Your Word so that I may learn to love You more, and to live for You wholeheartedly. Amen."

Before you go any further I want you to look with me at the meaning of the word translated "purposeless" or "vain" in verse 1. Keathley in his commentary writes, "'Purposeless,' or 'vain' is *keno* which means 'empty, without content, without any basis, without truth or power,' or it could be used in the sense of 'without result, effect, or profit, fruitless.' It was used of an empty jar, of sending someone away empty handed, and of empty words."2

From this definition, Paul could be using the word "vain" with reference to the results in the lives of the Thessalonians or with reference to the content and character of his preaching and ministry. Keathley believes that it relates to Paul's ministry since that is what follows this statement. But even if that is the case, the fact is the Thessalonians had exhibited fruit, and that fruit was evidence that Paul and his co-workers had not come empty-handed. It is proof they came with "truth and power." They came with the Word of God. And unlike the word of men, the Word of God is not empty or powerless.

Isaiah 55:11

"So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."

And we see in verses 13 through 15 that there were indeed results. The Thessalonians had received the word from Paul as God's Word, and there was evidence that the Word was working in their lives.

Read through 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 at least once.

What did Paul see in the Thessalonian believers that caused him to give thanks to God (v. 13)?

The NASB states the Word "performs its work in you who believe." The NKJV uses the phrase, "effectively works in you who believe." And the ESV and the NIV speaks of the Word "at work in you who believe." Looking back at the first chapter what evidence do you find there that reveals the work performed in these new believers in Thessalonica? Be sure to list the verses where you find your answers.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13 again. Did you notice how many times in that verse Paul spoke of the Word? When a word is used repeatedly in a passage or verse we should take note. Here Paul points out the Word given, the Word accepted and the Word at work.

Read the following scriptures and in the space provided record how the Word works in the lives of believers.

Joshua 1:8-9 (NASB)

"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Psalm 1:2-3 (NASB)

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers."

John 17:17 (NASB)

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."

Acts 20:32 (NASB)

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Hebrews 4:12 (NASB)

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

1 Peter 1:23 (NASB)

"For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God."

From our banner verse what did Paul hope to accomplish through his teaching of the Word? What does he say he did in order to reach this goal?

Paul thanked God for the Thessalonian believers' reception of the Word, and for the evidence of its effective working in their lives. Have you witnessed evidence of the Word working in the life of another believer?				
If so, how?				
Take a moment to thank God for that believer and the evidence of His work in their life. And then call, email or send a card to that believer with a word of encouragement. I know they will be blessed, as will you.				
"The work that the Word of God does is like no other. There is something about God's Word that reaches into the unreachable places of our spirits and exposes what needs exposing. God's Word brings into alignment our thoughts, actions and our plans - with His truth.3" - M.S.Lowndes				
What proof of the Word working in the believers' lives does Paul speak of in verse 14?				
How would Paul's mention of those suffering persecution in Judea be an encouragement to the believers in Thessalonica?				
DIG DEEPER: What do you learn about suffering and persecution from the following Scriptures? Romans 5:1-5				
2 Corinthians 1:4				

2 Timothy 3:12

1 Peter 4:12-13
1 Peter 5:10
In direct contrast to the reasons Paul gives for his joy over the Thessalonian believers, what things does he share about the Jews that bring him sorrow?
Why do you think Paul included this (vss. 15-16)?

Journal Prompt

We can never praise God enough for the power and work of His Word! Take your Bible and spend some quiet time with God reading Psalm 119. It is 176 verses long, so no need to finish the chapter, just spend quality time enjoying what you can. Mark or highlight any verse(s) that speak to your heart. Close your time with the Lord by writing your own praise to Him for His Word.

CO TO

Note: This chapter is sometimes called the "ABCs of Praise for God's Word" or the "Alphabet of Divine Love". It's theme is the Word of God, which it mentions under one of ten terms: law, way, testimony, precept, statute, commandments, judgment, word, saying, and truth. "In Matthew Henry's *Account of the Life and Death of His father, Philip Henry*, he says: 'Once, pressing the study of the Scriptures, he advised us to take a verse of this Psalm every morning to meditate upon, and so go over the Psalm twice in the year; and that, saith he, will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures."

Cultivating a Heart of Love



LORD, accept my offering of praise, and teach me your regulations.

Psalm 119:108 (NLT)

Matthew 22:37 (NASB)

"And He said to him, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND."

Dear Sisters,

As you've spent time in the Word this week, have you come away with a greater appreciation for the apostle Paul? Did you see through the words of the passage to Paul's heart:

- his servant's heart that endured hardship in fulfilling the call on his life?
- his preacher's heart that was compelled by one message, the gospel?
- his pastor-shepherd's heart that was wide open before God and His people?
- his teacher's heart that was set on presenting every believer complete in Christ?

Did you recognize Paul's heart as one compelled by LOVE?

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

COME EXPECTANT: Come today prepared to spend time reflecting on the love of God. "it is in our heart that we first hear the voice of God and it is in the heart that we come to know him and learn to live in his love."1—The Sacred Romance

Prayer:

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant me, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner woman, so that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith; and that I, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that I may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that I ask or think, according to the power that works within me, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:14-21 (adapted)

Write down words to describe the Apostle Paul (his attitude, motives, character):

In the overview to our week I wrote, "...although you may not be in "full time vocational" ministry, I think you will see the love that compelled Paul should be evident in your heart as well." The love that compelled Paul was the love of God—the love God displayed for all to see by sending His only begotten Son to die on a cross.

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

The apostle Paul was overwhelmed by the love of God—so much so that it overflowed into all he did. Paul had a strong, healthy heart which allowed him to minister God's love to others through good times and bad. He lived a fruitful and abundant life.

The condition of your heart needs to be a priority if you too are to be fruitful and live life to the fullest. A healthy spiritual heart is vital to your ability to sustain your love for God, and your love for others.

Proverbs 4:23

"Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life."

Today is a day for you to reflect on the last four days of study. The Lord has been speaking to you personally throughout the week. Now, I want you to let the Lord's words sink deep into your heart and make them your own.

Ezekiel 3:10

Moreover, He said to me, "Son of man, take into your heart all My words which I will speak to you and listen closely."

I was recently reading through notes taken at a women's retreat, and I found this statement, "To the degree that we live with an abiding sense of God's love for us, to that degree will we love God with all our heart, soul and mind." So with that thought in mind, we will begin by cultivating a sense of God's love for us so as to enlarge our love for Him.

Matthew 6:19-21

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Journal Prompt

As I read this verse the question I ask myself is, where is my heart. Is my heart seeking after and storing up the temporal (treasures of earth) or is it seeking after and storing up the eternal (treasures of heaven)? The choice is yours and mine to make. So let us store up treasures of heaven. In our quest to cultivate a sense of God's love the specific treasures we will be looking for are evidences of God's love.

Imagine your journal today as a treasure chest, in which you will begin to store up treasures suitable for heaven. Look back over each day of this week's study and write down the treasures you find. These can include verses or phrases that stood out to you, ideals that interested you, or a remembrance of God's love to you that was brought to mind as you studied, read or meditated on His Word.

May we live life to the fullest by treasuring the Lord above all else, for "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

"But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart." Luke 2:19

Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines ponder: to think about; reflect on.

Pick up your Bible and take some time to ponder in your heart the words of 1 John 4:7-21. You may even find a jewel to place in your treasure chest (journal).

Worship will flow from love. J. Oswald Sanders writes, "Where love is meager, worship will be scant. Where love is deep, worship will overflow." Worship and love go hand-in-hand. I believe that not only does love inspire worship, but that worship will stir our hearts to greater love.

"Worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and overpowering love in the presence of that most ancient Mystery, that majesty which philosophers call the First Cause but which we call Our Father Which Art in Heaven.3" - A. W. Tozer

As you close your lesson today, take a moment to worship the Lord. Write out, speak out, or sing out praises to God for HIS GREAT LOVE.

DAY ONE:

- 1. R. Kent Hughes, 2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 133.
- 2. A. W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1982), 82.
- 3. Steven J. Cole, *Responding to Opposition* (https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-4-responding-opposition-nehemiah-41-23).
- 4. Dean Trune, The Path Toward Passion (Terre Haute, IN: Prayershop Publishing, 2009), 119.

DAY TWO:

- 1. A. W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1982), 82.
- 2. J. Hampton Keathley, III, A Compelling Example for Ministry (https://bible.org/seriespage/4-compelling-example-ministry-1-thess-21-12).
- 3. John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary:* 1 & 2 *Thessalonians* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2002), 38-29.
- 4. Max Lucado, On the Anvil (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1985), 138.
- 5. David Mathis, *Twelve Gospel Passages to Soak In* (https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/twelve-gospel-passages-to-soak-in, 2013).
- 6. H. A. Ironside, *Ironside Commentaries: 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Neptune New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1997), 53.

DAY THREE:

- Charles Haddon Spurgeon (https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/2876959.Charles_Haddon_Spurgeon).
- 2. Priscilla Shirer, *Discerning the Voice of God: How to Recognize When God is Speaking* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2012), 150.
- 3. David Guzik, 1 Thessalonians Commentary (https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-thessalonians-2/).
- 4. Matthew West, Open Wide My Heart (Warner/Chappell Music, Inc.).

DAY FOUR:

- 1. Dean Trune, The Path Toward Passion (Terre Haute, IN: Prayershop Publishing, 2009), 78.
- 2. J. Hampton Keathley, III, A Compelling Example for Ministry (https://bible.org/seriespage/4-compelling-example-ministry-1-thess-21-12).
- 3. M. S. Lowndes, *Devotional: The Word of Truth* (http://www.heavensinspirations.com/word-of-truth. html).
- 4. Charles H. Spurgeon, The Treasury of David, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Classics, 1976), 510.

DAY FIVE:

- 1. Brent Curtis and John Eldredge, *The Sacred Romance; Drawing Closer to the Heart of God* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 4.
- 2. J. Oswald Sanders, Enjoying Intimacy with God (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 24.
- 3. D. J. Fant, A. W. Tozer (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1964), 90.

Where love is meager, worship will be scant. Where love is deep, worship will overflow.

J. Oswald Sanders

by Lori Moe

introduction

In 1962, Don and Carol Richardson risked their lives to share the gospel with the Sawi people of New Guinea. The book, <u>Peace Child</u>, tells their amazing story of living among these headhunting cannibals and finding the key to unlocking the saving message of Jesus Christ, bringing them into the kingdom of God. They and their 4 children remained there for 15 years, teaching, encouraging and loving this isolated, previously unreached tribe. When they returned to North America, they left their friends under the care of their own village leaders and another missionary couple. How hard it was to leave them behind, but they trusted God to finish the work. Fifty years later, Don and his 3 sons returned to the village.

What was the state of the church they planted among the Sawi?

Were the friends they made still alive?

Did anyone remember the mark their family left on the tribe?

The Richardsons' story parallels Paul's experience with the Thessalonian people. Although Paul was with them for just a few short weeks, he already loved them and earnestly desired for them to stand firm in their new faith. How he longed to go back and see how they were doing!

If you want to know how the Sawi village received the returning Richardsons, you can find out what happened by watching *Never the Same: 50 Years After Peace Child* by Pioneer USA on YouTube. Take 15 minutes, and witness the kingdom joy of them all!

This week we will learn how Paul experienced "kingdom joy" in his life as we look at 1 Thessalonians 2:17- 3:10.

We will study:

- Joy Under Pressure
- Kingdom Joy
- Joy in Affliction
- Faith-Based Joy
- Joy in Action

Each day's assignment will follow the PROSPER1 study outline:

- Pray to invite the Holy Spirit to awaken your heart and mind to the Word of God.
- Read the passage.
- Observe what the passage says.
- Study the passage more deeply.
- Ponder (meditate) on how it instructs us for living.
- Engage in personal application.
- Respond to what you have learned.

Endnote

1 Adapted from P.R.O.S.P.E.R. Bible Study Method at www.arabahjoy.com

For what thanksgiving he joy that we feel for your sake before our God

1 Thessalonians 3:9 (ESV)

Joy Under Pressure



Paul's present joy is at stake due to concern over the Thessalonian's faith because of affliction and temptation.

Does the pressure of circumstances rob you of your joy?

1 Thessalonians 3:9 (ESV)

"For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God."

Paul loved the Thessalonian believers. Although he had been able to teach them for just a short while before he was compelled to leave town, he had obviously formed a deep attachment to them as he did with so many others on his teaching journeys. But because he was so abruptly torn away from them, he felt the concern of leaving them inadequately equipped. Had they received enough teaching and experience to stand against the persecution of the Jews and the immorality and heathenism of their culture? He worried about having left them without enough. A job unfinished or not thoroughly done. Anxiety. Pressure.

Prayer:

"Dear Father, you are kind and loving to me. Thank you for your word that I study today. Open my mind and heart as I learn about your kingdom and your joy. Amen."

Let's take a look at the circumstances by thoroughly examining our passage.

- First, read again Acts 17:1-15 to re-familiarize yourself with the background of Paul's concern. Take note of where Paul has ended up (v. 15).
- Now read this week's passage on the next page and fill in the blanks. (Most Bible translations use the same words here, so you can look in your version of choice.)

1 Thessalonians (ESV)

2:17 But since we have been torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face,
18 because we wanted to come to you - I, Paul, again and again - but Satan hindered us.
19 For what is hope or or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?
20 For you are glory and
3:1 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone,
2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in,
3 that no one is moved by these afflictions. For you, yourselves know that we are destined for this.
4 For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.
5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about,
for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.
6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you -
7 for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through
8 For now, we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.
9 For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the that feel for your sake before our God,
10 as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in

 Look back at 1 Thessalonians 1:1. Write the names of the three men who are sending this letter. 			
To fill in the context a bit more, where did Paul end up after fleeing Thessalonica and Berea according to Acts 17:15?			
 At some point, Silas and Timothy rejoin him in Athens, but out of concern for the Thessalonians, what did they do according to verses 3:1-2? 			
So then, we had Paul and Silas left alone in Athens while Timothy went north to check on these young converts they had been torn away from. Let's take a look at why they were willing to be left behind!			
• Read verses 2:19, 20 and 3:9. What is the noun (thing) that fills in the blank?			
 Looking at the accompanying adjective, to whom does this feeling belong? 			
Now read verses 3:2, 5, 6, 7, 10. What is the noun?			
- And to whom does this belong?			
Our joy. Your faith.			
Paul and his coworkers feel for the sake of the Thessalonians as they			
consider the believers'			

 But, they are concerned. Go back to the passage and underline the word affliction in verses 3:3, 4, and 7. 			
Remember that Paul and the others had to flee Thessalonica (Acts 17:10) because of jealousy and opposition from the Jews, and this is not the first or last incident of affliction suffered by Paul and the other believers. According to verse 3:3, Paul was concerned that			
"no one be by these"			
He didn't want their faith to be shaken by what had been happening. Due to the circumstances, he was feeling the pressure of not knowing how they were faring.			
 Skim back through the passage and write down all the descriptive/feeling words in the passage that Paul uses in expressing his anxious emotions toward the Thessalonians. 			
 How would you describe Paul's emotional state before Timothy returned with his comforting report? 			
 Have you ever been in circumstances that may have caused you to have some of these feelings? 			
What caused Paul, Silas, and Timothy to rejoice when it came to the Thessalonians? Of course, they rejoiced when the gospel message was received and was then reassured of their faith with Timothy's report. Surely, the missionaries had gotten to know them well enough to have pleasure in their fellowship, to be happy for them when something good happened, and to be especially glad when they understood a deeper teaching.			

But the joy spoken of by Paul in this passage is more than that, isn't it? Paul says three things about his joy. Write them down.

2:19

Journal Prompt

- **2:20**
- 3:9

Paul's joy is in the current expression and ultimate result of their faith - how they were living out the gospel in the here and now (v. 3:6), and then being with them before the Lord Jesus at his coming (v. 2:19-20). His joy is for their sake, their position before God, and he, like a proud papa, can hardly wait to stand beside them on that day - despite the current circumstances and afflictions that surround them!

This is what we are going to call **Kingdom Joy**. We will explore this concept more fully in the next lesson, so between now and then think about it - cliffhanger!!!



DIG DEEPER: Read all of 1 Thessalonians and look at all the ways Paul expresses his feelings toward the young church. If you have time, skim through letters he wrote to other budding churches and note the concern he had for them as well.

Can you relate to Paul and his concern about his spiritual children? If you have circumstances that are causing worries about anyone or anything, how does it affect your joy? Or, what do you think about Kingdom Joy - what is it and do you have it? Write your thoughts, ask yourself questions, ask God questions and take time to ponder what the Holy Spirit brings to your mind.



Paul's joy was based on the kingdom of God that is to come and is present now.

What is the kingdom joy in your life?

Matthew 6:10 (ESV)

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Romans 14:17 (ESV)

"For the kingdom of God is...righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Sara was raised by wonderful Christian parents and loves God. Looking at her and her Orange County, CA family from the outside, she is a beautiful, loving wife and attentive mom of three kids in Christian school, attending church and involved in international missions. She lives out her faith in Jesus and does it well. But on the inside, she became restless and struggling - going through a time when she was questioning her purpose. So she went to her wise mom and asked, "What's wrong? What am I supposed to be doing?" And her wise mom answered with a question. "Sara, what are your dreams in the Kingdom?"

(Sara's story to be continued!)

Prayer:

"Our Holy Father in heaven, I come before you in mind, heart, and soul. I ask you to calm my mind, flood my heart with your love, and speak from your Spirit to mine as I study your Word this day. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth and in my life today as it is done in heaven. Amen."

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17 to 3:10. Maybe you would enjoy reading an alternate version?

Note	e the three instances where	Paul uses the word	joy by filling in the	blanks below:
- 2	2:19 For what is our	or	or	of boasting before our
1	Lord Jesus at his coming?	Is it not you?		
- 2	2:20 For you are our	and	•	
	3:9 For what thanksgiving your sake before our God.	can return to God	for you, for all the	that we feel for
• 1	n your own words write a d	description or expl	anation of Paul's j	oy expressed here.
- 1	Look up the word joy and w	vrite down a defini	tion and some syn	nonyms.
	ne New Testament, the Gree ght or gladness.	ek word " <i>chara"</i> is t	translated as joy ar	nd means cheerfulness, calm
they	were living out the gospel ir	n the here and now,	and then being wit	mate result of their faith - how th them before the Lord Jesus what we are calling Kingdom
	Look up the word kingdom	and write down a	definition and son	ne synonyms.
a re "kin	alm, or territory subject to th	he rule of a king. Necially by Jesus in t	Many times the phr he gospels. Matthe	om and means a rule or reign; ases "kingdom of heaven" or ew and Luke quote Jesus say- he rule or reign of God
Let's	s let John Piper explain:			
	"The kingdom of God is (God's reign not rea	lm: and it is his say	ina redeemina reian hrinaina

about the hallowing of his name and the joyful doing of his will. The kingdom of God is partially

fulfilled in the present and will be consummated at the end of the age when Christ comes a second time - it is yet future and already present."1

When Christ comes again, we will be overjoyed for sure and the thought of presenting the Thessalonians to the Lord Jesus at his coming is part of Paul's joy! But when we speak of Kingdom Joy in this week's study, we will mainly be talking about God's kingdom that's here today. It is the one begun by Jesus who came and laid the foundation, is present now, and its benefits are currently available to us who believe in him.

Look up the following verses to help you wrap your mind around this concept.

- Matthew 6:10
- Luke 10:9
- Luke 17:20-21
- Romans 14:17
- Colossians 1:12-14

According to Romans 14:17,	the kingdom of God tha	at we are experiencing in the he	re and
now is	and	and	in the
Holy Spirit. (Not about eatir	ng and drinking which w	as a problem he was addressin	g to the Romar
believers.)			

Once again, here's is John Piper's explanation:

"This seems to mean that the Holy Spirit is working these things right now. He is ruling in us to make us more righteous, more peaceable, and more joyful." "Where the Holy Spirit is bringing about righteousness and peace and joy, the kingdom (that is, the reign of God) is being manifested." ibid.

Now, let's define Kingdom Joy!

Having great pleasure and happiness when/where we see the Holy Spirit bring about righteousness and peace and joy - the manifestation of the kingdom of God.

Or

A pervasive sense of well-being as we experience the Holy Spirit working to bring about righteousness and peace and joy in our lives, those around us, and throughout the kingdom.

Which definition works best for you?

Let's finish Sara's story.

[&]quot;What are my dreams in the kingdom?' Sara asked herself. "What does that even mean?" She

went home and she prayed, she asked God questions and sought him through his Word, and she listened to what the Holy Spirit was whispering to her. And over time, God showed her passion for young children and their need to truly know their identity as beloved children of the Almighty God, and she moved forward. With a background in teaching, she developed, published and implemented a full curriculum to empower children to claim their identity in Christ, thereby instilling strength of character and sensitivity to others - a way to lessen bullying and its effects, and most important a way for the Holy Spirit to grow righteousness, peace, and joy in the hearts of those students. The curriculum is currently at use at a Christian school in Orange County and one in Uganda! Sara found her dream in the kingdom of God - her calling to be a part of his work in bearing fruit for the kingdom. Yes, she had joy in her relationship with God, joy in her family and friends and ministries. But now she has more joy - kingdom joy! She experienced the Holy Spirit bringing about the kingdom of God in her own life and the lives of many children.

- After reading Sara's story, what are you thinking?
- Where is God leading you with this concept of dreams in the kingdom or kingdom joy?

Here's another way to phrase the question:

• The kingdom of God is all around you. The Holy Spirit is bringing about righteousness, love, and joy. Will you join in the work?

How? What? When? Where?

Let's sort this out!

- In your journal, write down all of the people, places, things that bring joy to your life. Thank God and rejoice!
- Go back and look at your list. Write down which ones can possibly be considered as something in the "kingdom joy" category. Children and/or other family members, ministry (times and places where you serve others), hobbies or passions, other?
- Now select one or two from the possible kingdom joy list. Brainstorm ways that you can be intentional about joining God's kingdom work in that area.

For example, if you have children or grandchildren they (hopefully!) bring joy to your life in many ways. Certainly, as a parent or grandparent, you want God's righteousness, peace, and joy in their life. So, to intentionally join God at work in their lives, you will pray with them every night or read Bible stories or volunteer to teach Sunday school or drive them to youth group or any number of

other things that will come alongside the Holy Spirit. Their spiritual growth becomes a focus and source of kingdom joy as you see evidence of their faith.

Those things above are the more everyday things in your life that you can be involved into work for God's kingdom and that may be exactly where he wants you right now. But what about a deeper, more specific calling? (Ephesians 4:1, 1Thess.1:11)

- Are you currently joining God in kingdom work other than the above? Has God given you
 a dream in the kingdom and called you to be involved in his work in a specific way? If so,
 how has this brought you kingdom joy?
- Are you unsure of whether or not you are joining God where he may be inviting you? Do you know if you even have "dreams in the kingdom"? Ask God through prayer and Bible reading (and take time to listen for an answer!), ask others what they may see for you, take a spiritual gifts inventory if you're unaware of how the Holy Spirit may be working in you. Don't force it let God lead the way in his time. What are some of the questions you have for God right now?



DIG DEEPER: Continue a word study on <u>joy</u> or <u>kingdom</u> by looking up how what, when and where it is used in Scripture. Even deeper, look at all the ways Jesus describes the <u>kingdom of God or heaven</u>. I suggest using blueletterbible.org or a Bible dictionary and concordance.

Journal Prompt



What are you thankful for in your life? It is said that gratitude leads to joy! As you thank God, express your joy in his goodness. Then recall the times you have experienced kingdom joy in your walk with him and ask him for more!

¹ Piper, J. (2005, November 13). *The Kingdom of God is Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Spirit*. Retrieved from https://www.desiringgod.org

Joy in Affliction



Afflictions, hindrances, and temptations cannot rob our joy when we are focused on the kingdom of God.

How will you deal with trials?

James 1:2-4 (ESV)

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

I was devastated! A communication had arrived, and it was like a cannonball to the stomach. It detailed the ways I had wronged this person, used Scripture against me (yes, a follower of Jesus), and suggested how I should behave in the future. What? None of it was true - all fiery false arrows shot at me without just cause. I lay face down on the floor and cried out to the Lord and tried to let Him comfort me. After a while, I had to get up and go despite the heavy weight on my heart - my church "life group" was meeting at my house that night and I needed coffee from Costco! While I was at the coffee grinder, a couple of church friends stopped to chat and noticed I was down. Right then and there, those angels prayed for and encouraged me! When they were done, I looked up and there was another with whom I've been in a life group for years and she shared uplifting and supportive words with me. I was feeling God's love on me so strong! And then, I went to our nearby Mexican takeout place and there was another special church friend who built me up and affirmed me. Wow, God! The rest of the day, I told everyone I came across that God. Is. Real!!! That is some kingdom joy, right there! Although my trial did not go away, God's Holy Spirit personally ministered righteousness (his, not mine!), peace and joy to my spirit - a manifestation of his heavenly kingdom for me that day.

Prayer:

"Dear Father in heaven, you alone are holy and righteous and truth. I pray this day that I would receive the truth of your Word into my mind, heart, and spirit. Help me to understand what you would say to me through this study. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen."

Read the following verses and write down what they say about trials or affliction:

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, 4:17
- 1 Thessalonians 1:6
- James 1:2-4

• 1 Peter 1:3-7, 4:12-19
Now read 1 Thessalonians 2:17 to 3:10 again.
How many times does Paul mention affliction or troubles?
In our passage, Paul uses the word affliction or troubles 3 times. Do you remember the problems Paul, Silas, and Timothy had while they were within Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1-15)? They experienced persecution from men while preaching the gospel, and were forced to leave before they were ready. In verses 3:1-4 Paul explains that this kind of persecution not only occurred but is expected and will continue. When Paul mentions affliction in these 3 instances, he is referring to that persecution from the Jews and townspeople.
There are 2 more instances in the passage that relates to affliction or trial. What is the difficulty expressed in these 2 verses?
2:18
3:5

The three problems or trials that Paul was concerned about in this part of the letter are:

• Affliction from _____.

• Hindrance from _____.

Temptation from _______.

Let's take a look at these three examples of trials and how they are handled by some in the Bible.

To start, write out all of James 1:2-4.

The word steadfast (adjective) means firm in belief, determination, or adherence: loyal; devoted.

First, there is persecution from men or the worldly culture around us because of our faith in Christ. This can take on many forms and the Bible is full of oh, so many examples! Read the following accounts and write how these trials may have produced steadfastness.

- Daniel 3:8-25
- Acts 16:24-34

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19.

Write out verse 12.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego really knew what a fiery trial was! And what happened? Jesus showed up right in the middle of it. "Yippee! A trial! This is great!" Crazy? Not really because if you have the mindset of being closer to Jesus and standing more firm in faith during your difficult times, you will meet Jesus in a way that is thrilling, heartwarming, and blessed! I gave an example of one of my difficult times at the beginning of this day's lesson. That day was the beginning of learning to rejoice, submitting my pain and pride to Jesus. Now his Spirit is producing steadfastness and joy and peace in my life as I continue to walk through the trial. I am comforted by Jesus and by the support of sweet friends, and I am learning to comfort others. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Second, Paul says in verse 2:18 that Satan hindered him from coming to Thessalonica when he wanted to, again and again. Yikes! What could that mean? We can't know just how, but Paul has no doubt here that it was a work of evil, not a leading of God. This was spiritual warfare, for sure.

Read the following verses and write who or what was leading believers in these instances.

- Acts 16:6-7
- Romans 1:13
- 1 Corinthians 16:12

Paul knew the difference between being blocked by the Holy Spirit, circumstance or personal discretion, and being thwarted by Satan! Whether we are disallowed by the Holy Spirit to carry on what we think is a good work or impeded by the evil one in ministry to others, we may not always know, but all of our doings should be at God's direction through Bible reading, prayer, godly counsel, and more prayer.

Third, there is a temptation from the tempter. In this case, Paul was concerned since the new believers had only begun to understand the principles of the Christian life, Satan would tempt them back to their old, pagan ways - back to their "comfort zone" perhaps! Paul felt this about many of his new church plants and for good reason.

- 2 Corinthians 11:12-15
- Galatians 1:6-7, 4:8-10, 5:7

When have you undergone a testing trial because of your faith? How has it produced stead-fastness in your walk with God?

Have you ever been blocked from doing some good thing? Do you know/think it was God or Satan? Why would God block you? Why would Satan?

How does the tempter tempt you away from your faith? What calls you away from "God zone" and into some old, seemingly comfortable ways that are better left behind?

Read James 1:2-4 again.

We've learned a lot about affliction/trials/hindrance/temptation/persecution/worries/difficulties - you name it! We know that Paul still found joy amidst all he went through. How about you?

 Think back to a time when you went through something that made you stronger, more steadfast in your faith? Tell about the kingdom joy you can now recognize.

Journal Prompt

Are you going through a challenge now - a fiery trial? How are you doing? How are you handling it? Can you praise God for it?



DIG DEEPER: Here's a good question: Why was Paul worried? Why did he fear that his labor had been in vain? (v. 3:5) Specifically, where was his trust in God's Holy Spirit to do His work in the young churches? In facing these difficult times, he needed all his faith in the power of God! What do you DO when you are faced with challenges to your faith?

Write a prayer to your Heavenly Father who sees you and knows everything about what you're going through and how you're feeling about it. Tell him what's going on, ask him for wisdom and joy. If you need comfort to ask him and he will sing his peace over you. If you are grateful, tell him what you are thankful for.

Faith-based Joy



We build our kingdom joy by building our faith and relationship with Jesus Christ.

No Jesus, no joy. Know Jesus, know joy!

1 Thessalonians 3:8

"For now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord."

Gary and Kelly of Mission Viejo, California, were leaving for the mission field to reach Buddhist Thailand with the gospel of Jesus Christ. As they went, a happy remembrance on their hearts was Kelly's mother who had been practicing Buddhism in her native South Korea her whole life. Just about the time they were starting to plan their mission, Kelly visited her hometown and shared the love of Jesus with her mom as she had many times before. She focused on belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and this time the angels rejoiced in heaven when she believed!

Gary and Kelly were filled with joy and relief that Mom would share eternal life with them but were concerned about her faith. For 2 years, she received no discipleship training nor read the Bible. Expecting her faith to be dissipated, Kelly returned and found quite the contrary. The Holy Spirit had been transforming Mom and she no longer was going back to the Buddhist temple for advice because it didn't feel the same anymore. She began to attend the Presbyterian church and grew in inner peace and joy that she never had in all the years she was a Buddhist.

This experience taught Gary and Kelly that in order to reach Buddhists, they needed to help them understand that knowing Jesus is more than simply exchanging one religion for another and after 4 years in Thailand they continue to apply this knowledge. And Mom? She passed away last year after 6 years of standing fast in the Lord.

Prayer:

"Dear heavenly Father, how you long for me to draw near to you that I may know you and your love fully. I pray for your wisdom and understanding as I study your word. Please show me how to have joy in your kingdom as I explore faith today."

	3:2 to	and	you in your faith	
	3:5 I sent to	abou	t your faith.	
	3:6 brought us th	ne	of your faith ar	nd
	3:7 we have beer	າ	through your faith.	
	3:10 and	what is	in your faith.	
Re	ad also:			
	1 Thessalonians 1:3.	your	of faith and	of love and
	of h	ope in our Lord Jesus	s Christ.	
	1 Thessalonians 1:8	but your faith in _	has	
	eve	rywhere		
Paul had been concerned for the faith of the new believers (3:2, 5), but now at the writing of this letter, Timothy has just returned from visiting them with the joyful news that they are standing fast in their faith! Kingdom joy!				
	Timothy was sent ba	ick to Thessalonica to	o specifically do what? (vv. 3	3:2, 5)
		arn about their faith?		
	And for what did he	pray most earnestly i	n regards to their faith? (v. 3	3:10)

Re-read our passage and fill in the blanks from the verses in 1 Thessalonians 3 about "your faith":

 Look up the word "faith" and write down a definition and some synonyms. 				
In the New Testament, the Greek word "pistis" is translated as faith. As used in our passage, it means "a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God."				
Paul wanted to learn about their Christian faith - their belief in Jesus as the Savior of the world - and continue to help them establish it (strengthen; make firm), to exhort (comfort and encourage) them in that faith, and hopefully go back and supply what may be lacking in their convictions.				
• What is the evidence of their budding faith as reported by Timothy? What actions were the Thessalonians taking?				
See how the following verses show how this was taking place throughout all the other new churches:				
Ephesians 1:15				
Colossians 1:4				
Philemon 1:5-6				
God's Holy Spirit remained with the Thessalonians, even after Paul was torn away from them. They were strengthened with power through his Spirit in their inner beings! (Ephesians 3:16)				
This prayer written in Paul's letter to the Ephesian church gives a glimpse at the kind of faith and kingdom joy we can hope for here in this present kingdom. Read and meditate on these words.				

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

- If Timothy came to visit you and learn about your strong belief in Jesus as Savior, what would he find out?
- What news would he take back to Paul that would make them rejoice? Be positive!

Answer the following questions:

- Is your faith firmly established or is there doubt or lack of commitment?
- Where do you need encouragement or comfort in your faith?
- How can you get supplied with anything that may be lacking in your faith?
- Are you living a life of faith, love, and hope a life of kingdom joy?
- Does your faith in God "go forth everywhere"?

My prayer for us, no matter where we are in our faith walk with Jesus, is that we will continue to get to know him better through Bible reading and study, devoted time in worship and prayer, fellowship with other believers, and steps of obedience to his commands. Let us encourage one another so like Paul we can say, " For now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord."

Journal Prompt



DIG DEEPER: Using biblegateway.com or blueletterbible.org, do a search for the phrase "your faith" in the New Testament, especially in the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). What did Jesus have to say about "your faith"?

F	Listen to the song, <i>Give Me Faith</i> by Elevation Worship. Write your own prayer or song to about your faith. How would you fill in the blank?	God
	Give me faith to	

Joy in Action



Like Paul, we can take action toward joy.

What will you do in pursuit of kingdom joy?

Hebrews 12:1 (ESV)

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

"The world has enough women who know how to do their hair. It needs more women who know how to do hard and holy things." Thus tweeted @annvoskamp awhile back and it was something I needed to hear. I was entering into a hard and holy time in my life. My father had recently passed away and my aging mother needed care and companionship 24 hours a day - hard and holy. I'm still in the midst of it but fortunately share the responsibility with three sisters and we agree - this is hard to watch our mom decline and to give up parts or our own lives to be with her and love her, and it is holy for the same reasons. We are running this leg of the race set before us, enduring with joy in God's Holy Spirit.

Prayer:

"Lord, I thank you and praise you that you are with me today. I don't want busyness, worry or hard things to take my focus from you. Help me to learn from your word today, to focus on pursuing joy in your kingdom."

Read the entire passage one more time, 1 Thessalonians 2:17 - 3:10. Underline the action words that describe what Paul did to alleviate his worry and increase his joy.

(verses 2:17-18, 3:1-2, 5-10)

• What actions do you observe that show Paul's determination to make sure his new church was going to survive? The apostle Paul was certainly not a man to just sit there and think, "Oh well, I did what I could and now they're on their own - I hope they make it." He took his role as a messenger of the gospel very seriously and did all he could to ensure the success of his spiritual children.

First, we find that Paul tried (endeavored eagerly and with great desire!) to return to the Thessalonian church. Next, Timothy was sent to learn about their faith and continue to teach and encourage them. Finally, the 3 missionaries gave thanks to God for their sake and prayed earnestly to return to continue the work. (And, don't forget he wrote the Thessalonians 2 letters of encouragement!)

In your Bible or online, **find and study maps of Paul's missionary journeys.** They map out three trips throughout the middle east, Asia and Europe taken over the course of several years. Do you see Thessalonica?

In the New Testament, find out which of the letters (aka epistles) were written by Paul to the early churches and write them down. They are found in the New Testament after the book of Acts.

What drove Paul to such lengths, not only for the Thessalonians but for all the churches he served?

Was it because he thought it was all up to him?

Or because he didn't know how to say no? What do you think?

The answer is in our passage, isn't it?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

Write down the actions that Paul says will help us obtain the prize.

Read Hebrews 12:1-2.

Write down how we are to run the race before us.

How will you pursue joy in God's kingdom in light of these verses? A race is one step
at a time, and this is a long one so be specific to what you can do now, on this leg of the
course.



DIG DEEPER: Read Hebrews 12:1-17.

Who is the example of endurance to whom we are to look?

How is a going through a struggle likened to a father disciplining a child?

How are we to respond to this discipline?

Take a few moments to flip through the pages of this week's study. What have you learned about Kingdom Joy and how will you go forward, pursuing righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit?



Davl

day 1

Lifestyle of Prayer

"Day and night we pray..."

1 Thessalonians 3:10

"Prayer should be the breath of our breathing, the thought of our thinking, the soul of our feeling, and the life of our living, the sound of our hearing, the growth of our growing. Prayer in its magnitude is length without end, width without bounds, height without top, and depth without bottom. Illimitable in its breadth, exhaustless in height, fathomless in depths, and infinite in extension."

- Homer W. Hodge

Dear Sisters,

May God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ bless you richly as you open up your heart and mind today in the study of His Word. May you know how much He desires to pour out His favor upon you as you seek Him with your whole heart.

Timothy's brief visit to the Thessalonian church brought great encouragement both to Paul and Silas when he returned and shared the news of their faith. Their unwavering faith under the stress of persecution was the result of their genuine response to the gospel, lives invaded by the Holy Spirit. Paul's relief and joy overflowed in thanksgiving to God; at the same time, Paul and his companions longing to see their friends face to face once more were re-doubled. The pastor heart of Paul was compelled to encourage these young believers in their faith so that they might grow to maturity.

We arrive at the point where the letter begins to crescendo. There is a gradual increase of intensity, and excitement almost like volume in a musical score. Paul just can't help himself, as he writes to these believers, his love begins to swell to the point that he bursts into prayer for them. And that is where we begin today.

Please read 1 Thessalonians 3:10-13 and copy it down in the back of your book. And as you do, would you pray and ask God to come to do in and through you what is impossible for you to do on our own, and I'll do the same. Let's not just study the Scriptures, let us practice actively receiving them.

Pleas	se fill in	the blank below completing 1 Thessalonians 3:10 in the N	IASB ve	rsion.	
"As	we	and	keep	praying	most
		that we may see your face, and may	complet	e what is l	acking
in yo	ur faith	"			

How would you feel if someone told you that night and day they were praying for you? That their love for you was matched by their fervent prayer for you? Prayer is a free gift but is truly a labor of love that we can give to others. And this was certainly the case with Paul and his companions for the Thessalonian church. It reveals their love and enormous capacity they had to give of themselves both in time and energy for these believers.

This phrase 'night and day' is a favorite of Paul's and is used multiple times in his letters to the church. Scholars agree that this expression 'night and day' doesn't mean once in the evening and once in the morning, or that they did nothing else but pray. But it emphasizes a consistent frequency of prayer, and that it was their habitual practice. And not only that but their prayers had an extreme intensity about them.

Let's take a look at other examples in Scripture for this type of praying. List out any insights you discover (sometimes it's helpful to look at different versions of the same verse for a broader meaning).

Luke 18: 1-8

Romans 1:8-10

Colossians 4:2

1 Thessalonians 5:17

2 Timothy 1:3

If we could sum up these verses, we would probably agree that the prayer described here seems to have at its core a perseverance and steadfastness about it. It reveals an attitude of prayer, a lifestyle of continued prayer. The knees may not always be bent, and the lips may not always be vocal with words of prayer, but the spirit is always in the act of communication of prayer.

Jesus modeled a lifestyle of prayer. He prayed often. Let's take a look at some of these hallmark examples of prayer modeled in His life. Note what you discover from these verses.

Mark 1:35

Luke 5:16

Luke 6:12

Jesus always knew when He should withdraw and pray. He never became distracted by the work, because He always knew that power for the work came from God. More prayer equals more help and more blessing. Prayer was Jesus' continual lifestyle and practice. He prayed passionately for Himself and for others as He walked this earth. He knew that His authority and message came through prayer and through connecting with the Father in the power of the Spirit. The possibilities of His praying were unlimited, as were the possibilities of His ministry. The necessity of His praying was equaled only by the constancy with which He practiced it during His earthly life.

Look back up at our verse for today in 1 Thessalonians 3:10. Besides praying 'night and day' what is another descriptor of how Paul and his companions prayed?

Youngs Literal translates this verse "night and day exceedingly beseeching, that we might see your face, and perfect the things lacking in your faith." Of all of the New Testament writers, I have a soft spot in my heart for Paul. This man was full of fervor, intensity, and WORDS! He expressed himself with such passion, you can feel the intensity of his love for this young church. Because not only did he pray "night and day" but "exceedingly beseeching." The Greek word for "exceedingly beseeching" or "most earnestly" is huperekperissou from huper = above + ek = intensifies meaning, adding the idea of exhaustlessness + perissos = exceeding some number of measure, over and above, more than necessary. It means more than out of bounds, overflowing all bounds, surpassing, superabundantly, surpassingly, beyond measure, exceedingly, quite beyond all measure, overwhelming, over and above, more than enough. It describes an extraordinary degree, involving a considerable excess over what would be expected.1

Whew! What do you think about that? This was some serious, strong and even superabundant praying. This is extraordinary prayer over what one would normally pray.

We have a great need in this generation for a breed of Christians who will seek tirelessly after God, who would rise up and give Him no rest, day and night. What would happen if we began to pray like this? If you began to pray like this? If we desire to see a fresh move of God's Spirit and renewed works of His power among us it has to begin with prayer. God is not restricted within Himself, but He is restricted in us by our lack of faith and weak praying. The times demand people who are desperate for God's glory, who are unselfish in their desires, who are quenchless for God, who seek Him from late and early, and who will give themselves no rest until the "the whole earth is filled with His glory" (Ps. 72:19).

Will you answer this call toward a greater commitment toward this lifestyle of prayer? Write out a prayer asking God to stir the desire and discipline within you so that you will be known as a woman of prayer. Additional Scriptures for reflection: Ezekiel 22:30; Isaiah 59:16; Isaiah 63:5



Worship: Spirit Lead Me, Michael Ketterer

^{1.} James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew and Greek Lexicon (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001)

day 2

Power in the Name

"...and our Lord Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 3:11

Yesterday we began by looking at those who exemplified a lifestyle of prayer in Scripture. We saw that Paul seemed to have a prayer life that glided from regular conversation to prayer with a naturalness of one who lived in both elements. With him, the habit of prayer was free and unrestricted. His life was not divided into compartments. He lived in constant fellowship with God and it was as natural for him to pray as it was for him to breathe. Today we are going to look at a revolutionary transition to prayer for this very Jewish man. Let's review our passage of Scripture for this week.

Please read 1 Thessalonians 3:10-13. But before you do, take a moment to pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word today. If something stands out to you in this passage write it out below.

This was prayer with purpose from someone who knew he had the ear of God, and that God had the willingness as well as the power to grant the petition that he asked of Him. To Paul, God is not far off in some inaccessible region, but near and ever ready to listen to his prayer.

Please fill in the blank below from verse 11 in the NIV translation.

"Now may our	and	himself and our
	clear the way for u	s to come to you."

At first glance, this statement might not seem that unusual. We tumble past the terminology because it's familiar. For most of us, myself included, this kind of speech and approach to faith and the Scriptures is what we're used to hearing and we wouldn't give it a second thought. But it was not what Paul or these men had known. To Paul, this statement held significance without equal.

In this prayer, Paul is placing Jesus right alongside God the Father. This is one of the "earliest documented evidence of the profound change in prayer language that took place in Christianity as the early Christian community moved away from traditional Jewish prayers where God alone was addressed or invoked, to the address and invocation of both God and Jesus Christ."1 For this very Jewish man to mention God the Father and the Lord Jesus together in the same breath has great theological significance. It demonstrates that Paul held to the oneness of God and the full deity of Jesus. The addition of this phrase that gives 'position and authority formerly held only by Yahweh'2 was revolutionary and to Paul, was a truth worth dying for.

From the earliest mentions in Scripture God commissioned His servants and priests to pray and speak prayers and blessings over His people using His Name. Although this is seen in Genesis numerous times, Numbers introduces it as a divine ordinance.

Please read Numbers 6:22-27, fill in the blank below with verse 27 (NIV)

"So, they will put	on the Israelites, and I will
and the completer of blessing. God is the bank fr that endorses the check. In other words, may Go	He is the source of blessing, the fulfiller of blessing, om which the blessing is drawn and it is His Name d do what only He can do. May He show what only ve. May God bless as only He can bless. May God
-	veh as He is referred in the Old Testament was insus came on the scene, something changed. What
Please look up the verses listed below. How cross?	are we taught to address God this side of the
Matthew 6:9	
Mark 14:36	
Luke 11:2	
1 Peter 1:17	

To us, as followers of Christ, there is nothing more common than to address God as our Father. But just because it's familiar, we may have missed how revolutionary this teaching actually was in Jesus' day. There were (and still are today) appropriate forms to address God as a Jewish person. And the name of Yahweh is so sacred that some refuse to say His name out loud. Instead referring to Him as "the Almighty," "the One Above," or just "the Name." To this day those holding closely to Jewish tradition will not even write out His name fully but will leave out the vowels. The first Jewish rabbi to call God "Father" directly was Jesus. It was an extreme departure from tradition. In fact, in every recorded prayer we have from the lips of Jesus except one, he calls God "Father." Jesus referred to God as His Father 127 times and He spoke of God as being our Father 30 times.

Please read John 10:22-38 and summarize these verses.

When Jesus referred to God as His Father this infuriated the religious Jews of Jesus day considered it blasphemy to call God their Father, because they perceived that to mean they were equal with God. It was for that reason that many of Jesus' enemies sought to kill Him. He assumed to have this intimate, personal relationship with the sovereign God of heaven and the creator of all things. What's even more radical is that Jesus says to His people, "When you pray, you say, 'Our Father." He has given to us the right and privilege to come into the presence of the majesty of God and address Him as Father because He is, in fact, our Father. He has adopted us into His family and made us co-heirs with His only Son (Romans 8:17). Paul's prayer is directed to "our God and Father himself," and echoes the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples and that gave definition to their understanding of God and their relationship with Him.

In our passage, the Greek word for father is pater meaning either the nearest ancestor: natural father or the founder of a family, and one who stands in a father's place and looks after another in a paternal way.3 God is our Father through Christ and we've been brought into an intimate relationship with God. There are many Bible verses on the Father's love for us. Here is a list that have been especially helpful in my own growing intimacy with God as my Abba Father. Feel free to look up as many of these verses as you'd like. Let these words of life from Scripture take root down deep into your heart, and consider how much your heavenly Father loves you.

,
Psalm 68:5-6
Matthew 6:8
Matthew 6:26
Matthew 7:11
John 15:16
Romans 8:15
2 Corinthians 6:18
Ephesians 1:3-5
Ephesians 3:20-21

1 John 3:1

Take some time and write a prayer asking God give you are greater understanding of His love for you. Look up as many of these Scriptures as you like. If there is one that really speaks to you consider putting it to memory. Write them on Post-it notes and place them around your house or in the car as a reminder of His great love for you



Worship Song Suggestion: Sails, Pat Barrett; Good, Good Father, Chris Tomlin

- 1. Charles A. Wanamaker, The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 141
- 2. D. Michael Martin, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, The New American Commentary, vol. 33 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001).111
- 3. James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew and Greek Lexicon (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001)



There is a unique and beautiful design in this first letter to the Thessalonians, in that it has two main parts which are surrounded by three prayers. One at the beginning and one at the end which are like bookends and the third is in the middle. The middle prayer is our focus this week and is a transitional prayer, more specifically it is a spoken blessing. Yesterday we looked at the power of the Name of God that is attached to prayer and blessing. And that blessing flows from the abundance of God's own blessedness-our Heavenly Father's wise and loving intention to bless His children. His name designates His personality, His character, His will, and His heart for blessing His creation. The most powerful blessings begin by simply speaking His name: "The Lord bless you..."

Take a moment to pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word today. Ask Him to prompt you in a very specific way through this study and let Him know that whatever the prompting, your answer is "yes!"

Please read our passage of Scripture below.

"Now may our Father God and our precious Lord Jesus guide our steps on a path straight back to you. And may the Lord increase your love until it overflows toward one another and for all people, just as our love overflows toward you. Then your hearts will be strengthened in holiness so that you may be flawless and pure before the face of our God and Father at the appearing of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. Amen!" 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 TPT

In this prayer, Paul is asking God to do three things. Read the passage again and list them out below.

As Paul writes to these believers, his love and joy swell in such extravagant language. His longing to see them again is the first of his requests. We can't help but feel the intolerable suspense he must have felt when there was no news and this overwhelming joy when the news was good. His affectionate care and fervent prayer come from the intimate solidarity with them. His life entwined with their life and theirs with his. This is the language of a loving parent, who is separated from their children, who miss them dreadfully, and are profoundly anxious when they have no recent news of them. Pastoral love is parental love; that is its quality.

And we see this parental-pastoral love is expressed in the final two requests. Paul prays, asking God to make their love increase and overflow for each other. And third that they would be strengthened, with hearts that are blameless and holy in the presence of God at the return of our Lord Jesus.

These few verses in our text have been referred to as a prayer, a blessing, a benediction and also a "wish prayer" by some scholars. This tradition of a blessing or benediction has been a part of Jewish worship for generations, and we saw yesterday the priestly blessing recorded in the book of Numbers when God officially instituted this practice with the priests and provided us with an excellent example of a Godly blessing.

Numbers 6:24-26

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Think of it! We can not only experience life-lifting, joy-charged encouragement from heaven; we can actually direct that powerful flow into the hearts of others. Like the worker at the controls of a canal, we can open the floodgates and let the strong river of God's grace surge through us as we bless people in His mighty name.

The book of Proverbs lays strong emphasis on the power of our words. Look up the verses below and note what you discover.

Proverbs 12:25

Proverbs 16:24

Proverbs 18:21

Think of a time in your life when words were used to impact your life significantly. Did they build up or tear down? What was the result?

Just as our words can wound and tear down, they also have the power to do good to those who hear them. In the New Testament, the word bless is a translation of the Greek word eulogeo. According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, eulogeo means: to speak well of, to bless, to thank or invoke a benediction upon. When you bless others, you direct God's goodness to them; you intercede for them-"stand in the gap" for them as you come boldly to the throne of grace (Ezekiel 22:30 and Hebrews 4:16).

There are many examples of blessings or benedictions in the Bible here is just a sampling. List out what you learn about these blessings.

1 Corinthians 15:58	
2 Corinthians 13:11	
Ephesians 3:17-19	
Ephesians 3:20-21	
Philippians 4:6-8	
Colossians 3:15	
As a child of God, He has prepared you to be a channel of spoken blessing to others. Think of ho	۷

Romans 15:5-6

As a child of God, He has prepared you to be a channel of spoken blessing to others. Think of how He has abundantly poured out His grace in your life. When we center our lives on Christ and allow His Spirit to control us, we find ourselves wanting to do all we can for those we love most-to give them the highest and best gifts we can. And nothing is higher and better than God's blessing. What amazing grace it is that God allows us to be His instruments for directing His blessing into their lives!

How to bless someone effectively takes time and effort to search out appropriate blessings. Ask the Lord to make you attentive to His Spirit as you read Scripture, discerning which words, phrases, and concepts He wants you to share with someone.

When the Lord puts a desire in your heart to bless someone, in particular, be attentive to the needs she may be experiencing. With that person in mind, you can ask the questions below to help you discern the kind of blessing that is needed. Consider using the related Scripture reference in the blessing you share.

Is the fruit of the Spirit evident in her life? (Galatians 5:22-25)

Is she serving others in love? (Galatians 5:13 and Luke 6:27-38)

Is she seeking God's guidance so that she can carry out the good works God has prepared for her to do? (James 3:12-13; 1 Timothy 6:11-19; Titus 3:8, Hebrews 10:24)

Is she submitting to her God-ordained authorities? (Hebrews 13:17; James 4:7, Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 2:13-14)

Does it appear that something may be competing with her devotion to God? (Matthew 6:33)

Are there particular temptations that seem to present big challenges in her life? (Matthew 6:13, 1 Cor.10:13, Matt. 26:41, 1 Timothy 6:9-12, Luke 8:4-18)

Are you aware of any fears, hurts, or pressures that she is facing? (Galatians 6:1-3, James 5:16, Romans 12:1-15, Ephesians 4:32)

As you consider these questions, God can reveal areas of need in someone's life. Then, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to specific verses or passages of Scripture that can be used as a blessing related to those needs.

If you have someone in your life that is struggling with fear and anxiety, you could use a concordance, or search Google for verses that refer to "fear" and "anxiety" and "peace" and "comfort." As you search, you discover verses such as 2 Timothy 1:7, which says, "For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind." You may also discover that 1 John 4:18 and Philippians 4:6-9 contain words of wisdom and comfort, especially for someone who is fearful or anxious.

Using the verse 1 Corinthians 1:3 is how could you bless someone who is enduring deep sorrow.

Use the verse in 1 Peter 5:10 for a blessing for someone who is enduring a trial.

As you speak these words in prayer or speak them directly to the person for whom they are written, you will invoke the power, grace, and blessing of God upon her. You could also write it out in a letter or type it out in a text or email, or even say it in a voice text. God will use this as a source of great encouragement.

Has God brought someone to mind as you read through this? If so, take some time right now to act upon this Holy Spirit prompting.



Take some time to write a prayer to God expressing your thanksgiving and praise for His rich supply of blessings in your life. Be as specific as you can in what you thank Him for.

- 1. Gene L. Green, The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters to the Thessalonians (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan) p. 177
- 2. Bill Gothard, The Power of Spoken Blessing, (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah books, A division of Random House, Inc. 2004)
- 3. James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew and Greek Lexicon (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001)

Love Unrestrained



Yesterday we got deep into the Scriptures looking at different prayers of blessing. We also saw some verses about the power of our words in either building up or tearing down others. Whether we want to admit it or not, our words represent who we really are. They are a living expression of our heart, in the same way, that Jesus is the living expression of God the Father and is called "the Word." So if Christ, the source of all blessing dwells within us, and His Spirit directs our thoughts and feelings, our hearts will overflow with the Lord's desire and purpose to bless, spoken in our very own words.

Today we are going to look specifically at one facet of Paul's prayer of blessing for the Thessalonians that falls squarely in the center of God's will. We will discover today the power of the spoken blessing is amplified by invoking God's own words from Scripture. The strongest verbal blessing includes three powerful forces: God's name, our words, and God's words. Take a moment and ask God to speak to you deeply and profoundly today, and to reveal in you any hindrances or blind spots.

Let's review our passage.

"May God our Father himself and our Master Jesus clear the road to you! And may the Master pour on the love so it fills your lives and splashes over on everyone around you, just as it does from us to you. May you be infused with strength and purity, filled with confidence in the presence of God our Father when our Master Jesus arrives with all his followers." 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 The Message

Please fill in the blank below with our focus verse for today from 1 Thessalonians 3:12 in the NIV translation.

"May the Lord make your love	and	for
each other and for everyone else, just a	as ours does for you."	

Paul's prayer continues for the Thessalonians with a petition for the abundant growth of their love. Despite the love they've already shown, Paul's desire is that the Lord would make their love increase and overflow. We see in this verse that the "first verb is usually intransitive, but when used transitively it means to 'increase abundantly', even to the point of overflowing. The following verb is almost synonymous and as a transitive verb means 'to cause to abound' or 'to provide in superabundance." If Paul had access to today's technology, he would be using all capital letters, in bold font, with multiple exclamation points, and excited emoji to try and make his point. In his homily on Thessalonians Chrysostom states, "Do you see the unrestrainable madness of love that is shown by his words? Make you increase and abound..." 2

Paul's prayer is not simply that their love would increase, but that it abounds beyond limits, being exceedingly great and overflowing. This prayer is a model of the kind of overflowing love that Paul wants the Thessalonians to have for each other and for all people. With the love that Paul and his companions have for them. They were a true example of Christian love, which these believers imitated.

The call to love all people finds its roots in the teaching of Jesus. Please look up these verses below and note what you discover.

Matthew 5:43-48

Matthew 22:39

Mark 12:31-33

If this is Christ's highest command for us as believers have you ever wondered why we don't see lavish expressions of love regularly? We definitely take notice when we see extravagant actions of love. The world also takes notice, it's something that is widely commended. I don't want to sound cynical, but doesn't it seem that this kind of love is more the exception and not the norm?

What extraordinary act of love have you experienced from another person?

Jesus says in John 13:35 "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." Did you see the conditional clause that Jesus put in the middle of that sentence? This little word "if" reveals an awareness that we are responsible for our own behavior in cooperation with God who works through His Spirit in our lives.

I don't know about you but loving people is hard. There are some people who are easy to love. But then there are those more difficult people that make loving them an outright challenge. A friend of mine used to refer to those types of people as "MGR's" they are More Grace Required kind of people. Don't you know it! Whether it's people that are easy to love or difficult, to love here way Jesus has told us to love can ONLY come by the power of His Spirit actively working within us. And we need to pray and ask God to create within us the capacity to love not only Him but others. And this is exactly what Paul is doing in his prayer for the Thessalonians. He is asking God to increase their capacity to love.

Look up Ephesians 3:16-19 what is Paul praying for these believers in this passage? How is love described in these verses?

We need divine power to grasp measureless love, in order that we can know what cannot be known. We need supernatural strength and empowerment from God to understand His great love for us. When this truth has anchored itself deep within our souls, is when loving others with this same kind of love can be possible. To the degree in which this has made its home down to the depths of our souls that is the degree that we will be able to truly love others.

To live a life of increase and overflow will begin on our knees. And couple that with God's Word and you have in your hands two sticks of dynamite. When we strap God's Word and prayer together and then ignite it with faith and the power of His Name, then you'd better STAND BACK!

Journal Prompt: Do you desire to have your life in complete alignment with God's will and His Word? If so, read through these questions below asking God to shine a light on anything that He desires to bring to your attention. When one stands out, write it in your journal. Now look for Scriptures that speak to that very thing and begin to pray them over your life.

Do I love the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength?

Do I regularly enjoy personal time with God in prayer and in His Word?

Am I depending fully on Jesus and the indwelling power of His Spirit for acceptance in God's eyes, rather than trying to please Him and live for Him in my own power?

Am I experiencing consistent joy and peace through fully trusting the Lord in all kinds of circumstances and trails?

Am I consciously depending on the Spirit's giftedness and serving others in love?

Am I actively walking in the Spirit's power as a witness to unbelievers?

Am I submitting to God-ordained authorities and to His discipline in my life?

Is anything in my life competing with my walk with the Lord?

What temptation seems to have the strongest hold in my life?

What fears, hurts or pressures are most present currently?



Worship Song: The Cause of Christ, Kari Jobe

- 1. Gene L. Green, The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters to the Thessalonians (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan) p. 177
- 2. Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Thessalonians 4

The Business of Prayer



"The earth is changed, revolutionized; angels move on more powerful, more rapid wings; and God's policy is shaped when the prayers of His people are more numerous and more efficient."

- E.M. Bounds

People must pray, and people must be prayed for. And Paul was a man of prayer, he made a business of it. There was a fervor, an urgency, perseverance and time all put into it. He spent himself in prayer for God's people. Jesus said that we should "always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1). May God stir within us this same heart of prayer that Paul possessed. For it is earnest prayer that needs to be done.

Let's review our passage from 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13. But first, please take a moment to pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word today, that He might shed light on the very heart and essence this passage and make us into women of prayer.

"Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) guide our steps to you. And may the Lord make you to increase and excel and overflow in love for one another and for all people, just as we also do for you. So that He may strengthen and confirm and establish your hearts faultlessly pure and unblameable in holiness in the sight of our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) with all His saints (the holy and glorified people of God)! Amen, (so be it)!" Amplified Version

What three things is Paul praying for the Thessalonian's in this prayer?

In a nutshell the Apostle Paul summarizes, in three short verses this letter to the Thessalonians beautifully. His ardent desire for them is that their lives would be permeated by love and characterized by holiness so that they would be blameless at the return of Jesus. Holiness, love and the hope of Jesus' return is what 1 Thessalonians is all about.

What is the connection between love and holiness in this passage?

Please fill in the blanks from our focus verse for today found in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 in the ESV version.

" <u> </u>	_He may establish your hearts
in	before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord
locus with all His saints"	

The first two words of this verse "so that" give us a clear understanding of the purpose and aim of this prayer. Paul is asking God that the Thessalonians would increase and abound love so that they would be established. We can see that love is right at the heart and is essential in living a life of holiness.

In order to have holiness forged in our lives, it has to begin with prayer. And if we desire greater holiness we need to pray for greater love. A desire for greater love and holiness cannot be separated from prayer, for this is the work of God through His Holy Spirit within us. There is any number of things we can pray for. We see that Scripture tells us to pray "with every kind of prayer and petition" (Ephesians 6:18). But prayers for people are infinitely more important, than things. And Paul shows us in these few short verses that what should be constantly and earnestly prayed for-is greater love and that we may be made holy. The Greek word for "holy" used in this context is hagiosune and it refers to holiness, not in the sense of describing the process of becoming holy but rather the quality of being holy. "It is the quality of holiness as an expression of the divine in contrast with the human. It has an ethical quality that reveals itself in a purity of life. It indicates the state or condition of holiness."1

How does Scripture describe how we are made holy?

Ephesians 5:26

Hebrews 10:10

We can't make ourselves holy, we must be cleansed from sin by the precious, atoning blood of Christ and be made Holy by the washing of the Word and by His Spirit. Being must precede doing. First be, then do. First obtain a holy heart, then live a holy life. This is the work of God in a believer's life by the Holy Spirit, to conform us into the image of Jesus.

If we are not growing in holiness, then we are only deluding ourselves. Have you ever wondered why we have so few mighty outpourings of the Holy Spirit? If we desire to make advances on the lines of deep spirituality and see God's Spirit move powerfully and His works renewed in our day, then we need to be a praying people who are hungering after holiness. Praying for people more deeply involves God's will and His Kingdom work. This makes praying a real business and not a trivial matter, but a serious business. People who have made a success of praying have made a business of praying.

Have we cultivated other things to the neglect of the work of holiness? Are our minds so preoccupied with the things of this world that spiritual matters don't interest us? Has prayer become more of an obligation than our hot pursuit? May we determine in our hearts to fervently pray for a greater

love and holiness for ourselves and others.

"When God's house on earth is a house of prayer, then God's house in heaven is busy and powerful in

its plans and movements." - E.M. Bounds

One of the most important lessons we can learn is how to pray. Every prayer that has been uttered by the lips of man lives before God and outlives us. Prayer is a voice that goes into God's ear, and it

lives as long as His ear is open.

Prayer is prominent all throughout Paul's letters to the churches. Below is a sampling of just some

of Paul's prayers. They are a wonderful model for us to help cultivate a deeper and richer prayer life.

Please read through each of these passages and list out specific things that Paul is praying for the believers and for himself. Pray for yourself and for other believers and non-believers in

your life.

Ephesians 1:15-23

Ephesians 3:14-21

Ephesians 6:19-20

Colossians 1:3-14

Colossians 4:2-4

131

From this list of prayers above, personalize these into prayers for yourself and others. Consider starting a prayer journal that begins to expand how you pray and who you pray for. Ask God to help you grow as a woman of prayer.



Worship Song: The Lord's Prayer, Hillsong; As it is, Hillsong



introduction

ABOUND MORE AND MORE

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

"Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should ABOUND MORE AND MORE..." 1 Thessalonians 4:1a (NKJV)

Sweet Sisters,

This week as we look into our passage we will be encouraged and challenged to ABOUND MORE AND MORE in our walk. No matter where you are in your walk, Paul would encourage you to reach higher still.

In the previous chapters Paul has had nothing but praise for the Thessalonian believers. He praised them for their work of faith, their labor of love, and their steadfastness of hope (1:3). He commended them for their acceptance of the Word as the Word of God (1:5, 2:13), and for the joy they displayed amidst tribulation (1:6; 2:14). He applauded the working of the Word and the Spirit in their lives, evidenced in their turning from idols to serve the living God (1:9; 2:13). And he sang their praises saying, "Now the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere" (1:8 NLT).

And we may ask why ABOUND MORE AND MORE if they are doing so well? There might be a clue in his prayer just before he exhorts them to abound more. Here he also encourages them to increase and abound, and adds, "so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (3:13).

The finish line, "the coming of the Lord" is ahead. They have not reached it yet, so Paul is encouraging them to keep going and to continue to reach higher and farther still. As Paul writes to this church of young, vibrant, and joyful believers exhorting them to ABOUND MORE AND MORE he has in mind the "blessed hope" (Tit. 2:13), "the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" (3:13; 5:23). Throughout the letter Paul brings this up again and again (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:17; 5:23). It is in light of the Lord's coming that Paul exhorts them (and us) to ABOUND MORE AND MORE in our walk of purity, love, and wisdom.

Note: Questions are based on the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise stated.

Walk to Please God



"Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."

2 Corinthians 5:9 (NASB)

As we begin to unpack our verses for today I thought it would be good to look at a few of the words that we find in these verses so as to give us a better understanding of Paul's exhortations in this passage.

Paul begins this section with "finally then." "The word rendered "Finally" (loipon) is an adverbial accusative, 'as for the rest,' and serves to mark a transition rather than a conclusion." Having prayed that the Thessalonians' hearts would be established without blame in holiness at the Lord's coming (3:13), Paul transitions into practical exhortations to that end.

In the verses we will look at today Paul urges and exhorts the Thessalonian believers to ABOUND MORE AND MORE in their walk. Paul wanted these new believers not to be content with their spiritual growth but to strive for even more. The word translated "abound" (NKJV) and "excel" (NASB) "(perisseuete) means to abound, to be abundantly supplied, to overflow, to exist in full quantity, to be over and above and around, to be advanced." "To this he adds the adverb more (mallon) to a greater degree."

Paul wanted these believers who exhibited such joy and love in the faith to continue to grow—to not be satisfied with where they were in their walk but to pursue excellence, to reach even higher. Paul wanted them to reach maturity—to be spiritually mature.

"Spiritual growth is critical. Call it what you will: pursuing righteousness (1 Timothy 6:11); being transformed (Romans 12:2); perfecting holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1); pressing toward the goal (Philippians 3:14); or being built up in the faith (Colossians 2:7). The goal is the same for every Christian: to be "... transformed into (the Lord's) image..." (2 Corinthians 3:18). It comes through understanding and practicing the principles that are given in the Word of God.^{4"}

-John MacArthur

Paul wanted these believers to reach for "the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13)—to be transformed into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18). For in Him, God was well-pleased (Matt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

COME EXPECTANT:

"God is here and He is speaking....God did not write a book and send it by messenger to be read at a distance by unaided minds. He spoke a Book and lives in His spoken words, constantly speaking His words and causing the power of them to persist across the years.^{5"}

-A. W. Tozer

Prayer:

"Father God, I come before with a willing and expectant heart—open to what You would speak to me this day. Help me to tune out the noises of my everyday life as I focus on hearing from You. May I leave this time of study with a greater knowledge of You and how I might please You. Amen."

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12. If you have taken on the challenge to write out the passage, go to the back of the book and copy this week's passage there. Now read today's verses 1 and 2.
In what does Paul want the Thessalonians to abound or excel?
action:
motive:
Do a word study on the word "pleasing." Read two or more of the following scriptures and record what you learn about pleasing God in the space provided. Note: the word "acceptable" is defined as pleasing or well-pleasing.
Romans 12:1-2

Ephesians 5:1-10

Hebrews 11:5, 6 (see also Genesis 5:21-24)

Hebrews 13:20-21

How is the instruction the Thessalonians received from Paul described?

The verb peripateo literally means '**to walk**' but has the metaphorical sense of 'living one's life.' It is not only one of Paul's favorite words to describe the Christian life (it occurs 32 times in his letters), it is also one of his more strategic terms as it is used to introduce themes that the apostle considered to be fundamental. This metaphorical use of 'walking' to describe moral conduct has its roots in Paul's Jewish background (approximately 200 of the 1547 occurrences of the Hebrew verb 'to walk' in the Old Testament are metaphorical).⁶ —Jeffrey A. D. Weima

There is a challenge in the above paragraph. Paul used the word "walk" 32 times in his let-

ters. Using your concordance find at least three of Paul's uses of the word "walk," and record where you find it and what it says.



DIG DEEPER: Read more about the word, "walk" at the site listed and write down anything you find interesting and/or would like to share with your group:

https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/walk/

The word "commandments" in verse 2 "(parangelia) was often used either for military command or civil order, for example by a court or by magistrates." It is the word "orders" used in Acts 5:28. There the high priest says to Peter and the apostles, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name."

Read again verse 2 in today's scripture. What did the Thessalonians know? Would the authority in which these commandments were given make a difference in their willingness to obey them? Explain your answer.

John MacArthur writes, "Spiritual growth is not an instantaneous process; it does not culminate overnight. Instead, the pursuit of spiritual excellence is a lifelong commitment. As they walk in daily obedience, believers gradually but surely become more and more like Christ." Christianity is not a sprint but a lifelong walk that takes perseverance.

Read the following passages and describe the mindset you need to stay the course in your pursuit of spiritual excellence.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Philippians 3:12-14

THE BOTTOM LINE of these two verses, and the foundation for the rest of the passage is that we are to walk in order to please God by receiving His instructions and obeying His commandments. Will you decide to walk according to His will in such a way as to please Him? If your answer is yes, share your desire to do so with the Lord.

You may be thinking this abounding business is a too much for you to take on. But remember the power to abound comes from the power of the indwelling Christ. As you yield to Him in faith and obedience He is faithful, and He will bring it to pass. Read Paul's final prayer of this letter (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) and be encouraged:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

So do your part to ABOUND MORE AND MORE as you rest in Christ.

Ask yourself:

Is my walk pleasing to God and is He glorified in it?

What MORE of Christ have I seen in my walk since becoming a Christian?

What MORE of Christ do I desire to see?

What might I do to see MORE in my pursuit of excellence?

Write a prayer to God asking Him to help and guide you in your pursuit to please Him MORE and MORE.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NASB)

"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

day 2

Walk in Purity

"... so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ."

Philippians 1:10 (NASB)

Sweet Sisters,

Welcome to day two! Our focus today will be on verses 3 through 8 of our passage.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (NASB)

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you."

The following comes from R. C. Sprouls' book, *The Holiness of God*:

The saints of Scripture were called saints not because they were already pure but because they were people who were set apart and called to purity.¹

On this same topic, Sproul writes of the call on God's chosen people which is, "Be ye holy, even as I am holy."

This special call to Israel was really not new. It did not begin with Moses or even with father Abraham. The call to holiness was first given to Adam and Eve. This was the original assignment of the human race. We were created in the image of God. To be God's image meant, among other things, that we were made to mirror and reflect the character of God. We were created to shine forth to the world the holiness of God. This is the chief end of man, the very reason for his existence.²

As Christians, we too are called to be holy. We have been consecrated and set apart to live a life that is different. We are to live a life of nonconformity (Romans12:1-2). Here in this passage Paul will exhort the Thessalonians to walk differently from the culture in which they lived—to WALK in PURITY.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

COME EXPECTANT: "The very God of the universe speaks on every page into my mind—and your mind. We hear his very words."

-John Piper

Prayer:

"Lord God, You are holy—high and lifted up. It is beyond me to truly understand all that that means, so I look to Your Spirit to guide my heart and mind today as I study Your Word. I ask for quietness of thoughts as I dedicate this time to You and Your Word. It is my desire to be a doer, not merely a hearer, so help me to see ways to make the Word active in my life Amen."

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 through at least one time. Then read today's focus, verses 3-8.

Verse 3 begins, "This is the will of God, your sanctification..." Using a dictionary look up the word "sanctification," and write the definition in the space provided.



DIG DEEPER: What truths do the following scriptures teach about the process of sanctification? Record what you learn in the space provided

Psalm 4:3a (NASB)

"But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself."

Romans 8:28-29 (NASB)

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren."

Philippians 1:6 (NASB)

"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Philippians 2:13 (NASB)

"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NASB)

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy.""

"Sexual immorality (porneias) is a term used to describe any form of illicit sexual behavior (John 8:41; Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; Rev. 2:21; 9:21). Any sexual activity that deviates from the monogamous relationship between a husband and wife is immoral by God's standard. The Lord does bless the sexual relationship in matrimony: 'Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled' (Heb. 13:4a). But He is not

pleased with sexual activity of any kind other than that: 'for fornicators and adulterers God will judge' (Heb. 13:4b, cf. Rom. 1:24-32; 2:2)."4
In verses 3 through 6 Paul gives 3 directives concerning sanctification. List them below.
What does Paul say in verses 6b through 8 to discourage unhealthy immoral behavior?
How would your thoughts and actions change if you were to really take to heart Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:13-20?
In our bottle for purity what are come of the major minofields we encounter?
In our battle for purity what are some of the major minefields we encounter? Mark 7:15, 20-23
Ephesians 6:12
James 1:13-16
1 John 2:15-16
1 John 2.15-10
Which of these is most dangerous for you?
What do the following verses teach us to help us out on the battlefield?
Romans 6:11-14
Enhasiana 0.40 44
Ephesians 6:10-11

Philippians 4:8	
Colossians 3:1-5	
1 John 3:7-9	
Write out and meditate on Romans 12:1-2.	
DIG DEEPER: Memorize Romans 12:1-2.	



Spend a moment to reflect on all you have studied in today's lesson. Consider one thing that stood out to you that you would like to focus on in the next week. It may be a verse(s) you would like to look into or meditate on. It may be a concept you would like to further investigate. It may be something you are convicted to do in response to what you read. Whatever it is, write a prayer below, inviting the Spirit to guide, encourage, and empower you in your endeavor.



The Christian faith is not merely a set of doctrines to be accepted.

It is a power to be experienced.6

-John Piper

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NASB)

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."

Sweet Sisters,

Did you know that the appeal to love others is one of the most repeated exhortations in the whole New Testament? Gene Getz writes, "This should not surprise us since 'love is the fulfillment of the law.' It appears no less than fifty-five times—as a direct command."

Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). And Paul in his letter to the Corinthians said, "Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13 NLT). Love is as Dr. Francis Schaeffer says, "the mark of a Christian!"

Max Lucado shared this illustration about the powerful witness of love: "Every week I visit with a young couple. They are thinking about becoming Christians. I asked them the other day: 'What is it that's making you think about giving your life to Christ?' I guess I hoped they would say 'my messages' but they didn't say that. I hoped they might say the music at the church, but they didn't say that either. They said there's something in this church about the way people love one another that we don't find anywhere else, and it's very hard for us to leave." That is definitely the kind of congregation you want to be a part of or to emulate.

Our focus today are verses 9 and 10 of our passage (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12). And if you haven't guessed by now, it is about LOVE, specifically about love of the brethren.

Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more. 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 (ESV)

Notice that there is the exhortation to love "more and more" just as in the opening verse of the passage. We are to be a people who WALK in LOVE and continue to do so MORE and MORE.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

COME EXPECTANT:

"Oh, how precious is the Bible. It is the very word of God. In it God speaks in the twenty-first century. This is the very voice of God.³

-John Piper

Prayer:

"Father God, Oh, how precious is Your Word! I come this day with a willing spirit and an open heart. May my time in Your Word be fruitful, and may I put that which You show me to use in my walk. Right now quiet my thoughts that I might focus only on Your Word. Amen"

Read through 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 at least once. Try a different version than you normally use—possibly a paraphrase.

What do you think Paul means by "you yourselves are taught by God to love one another" (v. 9)? See Romans 5:5; 1 John 4:7-8, 12; 1 Corinthians 2:13.

As exemplary as the Thessalonian believers' love was, Paul urges them to "excel still more" (v. 10). A similar encouragement by the apostle Peter is found in 1 Peter 1:22:

"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart."

John MacArthur writes, "Fervently love one another' could literally be rendered 'stretch out to the limits of love for one another."

How might these young believers "stretch out to the limits" their love for one another?

The phrase love "one another" (allelon) in verse 10 is just one of many "one another" exhortations found in the New Testament. Each of these is an expression of love, and as the brethren perform these, the body is built up in love (Eph. 4:16).

Look up the following verses to find 7 of these "one another" exhortations. What do they encourage the brethren to do?

John 13:34

Romans 14:19

Galatians 5:13

Ephesians 4:2

Colossians 3:13

Hebrews 10:24

James 5:16

Which one of these "one another" exhortations is most difficult for you and why?

Pray that God, through His Spirit would help you to love in this way.

Sometimes we think in order to show love or make a difference in someone's life we need to do something big—when in fact, there are any number of little things we can do to do just that.

Read the following from Max Lucado's book, *On the Anvil*. Then write down as many little things you can do for another believer (or unbeliever). When you get together with your group see how many different little things you all came up with.

A GOOD HEART, BUT. . .

(Scene—Sunday A.M. assembly; silent prayer)

Max: God, I want to do great things.

God: You do?

Max: You bet! I want to teach millions! I want to fill the Rose Bowl! I

want all of the world to know your saving power! I dream of the

day. . . .

God: That's great, Max. In fact, I can use you today after church.

Max: Super! How about some radio and TV work, or ... or ... or an

engagement to speak to Congress?

God: Well, that's not exactly what I had in mind. See that fellow sitting

next to you?

Max: Yes.

God: He needs a ride home.

Max (quietly): What?

God: He needs a ride home. And while you're at it, one of the older

ladies sitting near you is worried about getting a refrigerator

moved. Why don't you drop by this afternoon and....

Max (pleading): But God, what about the world?

God (smiling): Think about it.⁵ —Max Lucado



DIG DEEPER: Read Ephesians 4:11-16 through at least one time. Now let's see what biblical truths we can glean from this passage as it relates to loving the brethren.

What is the function of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers?

What do you think Paul means by "the work of service" in verse 12? Read also: 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 and 1 Peter 4:8-11.
What does this work accomplish (v. 12)?
What is the end goal according to verse 13?
How is spiritual infancy described in verse 14?
What is required for the body to grow into maturity?
How is love related to growth of the body?

Journal Prompt

Read Hebrews 13:15-16 (NASB)

"Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."



Offer up a sacrifice of praise (the fruit of your lips) to God—giving thanks to Him for His great love. Write a prayer to God asking Him to show you ways you might do good and share with others as an expression of love.

Walk in Wisdom

day 4

"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

-1 John 3:16 NASB

Colossians 4:5 (NASB)

"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity." Colossians 4:5

Sweet Sisters,

Our focus today is on the final two verses of our passage:

"And to make it your ambition to live quietly and peacefully, and to mind your own affairs and work with your hands, just as we directed you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders [exhibiting good character, personal integrity, and moral courage worthy of the respect of the outside world], and be dependent on no one and in need of nothing [be self-supporting]."

-1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 (AMP)

Warren Wiersbe writes regarding these verses, "As believers, we must be careful in our relationships with 'those that are without.' It requires spiritual grace and wisdom to have contact without contamination and to be different without being judgmental and proud.... If we lack this spiritual wisdom we will do more harm than good."

As Wiersbe said we need spiritual wisdom to navigate those relationships we have with unbelievers in order to rightly present Christ to them. The way we live our lives (our walk) is so important. John MacArthur expresses the importance of our walk when he writes, "No matter what their station in life, Christian men and women who are not what they ought to be will give people reason to blaspheme God's Word. The world doesn't judge us by our theology; it judges us by our behavior. The validity of Scripture in the world's view is determined by how it affects us. If unbelievers see that our lives are truly transformed, separate and distinct from the world, they might conclude that Scripture is true, powerful, and life-changing." When our walk is not as it should be, those on the outside see a distorted picture of Christ and the gospel, and any opportunity we have to share the gospel is negated. We do more harm than good when we lack spiritual wisdom in our dealings with non-believers.

Knowing that we will be judged by "outsiders" not merely by our words, but more so by our actions (walk) it behooves to WALK in WISDOM.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

COME EXPECTANT:

"And, the Bible is explicit, God speaks to us just as powerfully today as in the days in which the Bible was written. His Voice waits to be heard, and having heard it, we are launched into the greatest, most exciting adventure we could ever imagine.3"—Charles Stanley

Prayer:

"Lord God, Thank You for this day, and for this Word that speaks with wisdom and power. May my eyes be open to the wonderful things of Your Word, and may my heart be receptive to that which You will speak to me. Clear my mind of the thoughts of my day to day activities so that I may hear You clearly. I want to be a woman who wisely makes use of every opportunity to present You to a lost and dying world. Amen"

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 (NASB) at least one time through. Now look again at verses 11 and 12:

"and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave (lit. walk) properly toward outsiders and not be in any need."

Note: *Make it your ambition* (5389)(**philotimeomai** from **philos** = friend, loved + **time** = honor) means literally to be fond of honour, to be actuated by love of honor and hence to strive or seek for honour and hence to be ambitious. In later Greek it came to denote restless eagerness in any pursuit, hence, "to strive eagerly, to be zealous."



DIG DEEPER: Read 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12 to gain insight into what was going on in Thessalonica that would give rise to Paul's exhortations in our current passage. **Record what you find:**

What do you think "to lead a quiet life" means and what are the benefits for doing so?

Optional: You might want to consider the following scriptures in your answer: 1 Timothy 2:1-6; 1 Peter 2:11-12, 3:16.

What else does Paul admonish the Thessalonians to do with regard to living a quiet life? How would these exhortations help the Thessalonians to live a *quiet life*?

Consider the following scriptures that speak of *work* and highlight those things that relate to why we should work and what benefits we gain from working.

Acts 20:35 (AMP)

"In everything I showed you [by example] that by working hard in this way you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed [and brings greater joy] to give than to receive.""

Ephesians 4:28 (AMP)

"The thief [who has become a believer] must no longer steal, but instead he must work hard [making an honest living], producing that which is good with his own hands, so that he will have something to share with those in need."

Colossians 3:23 (AMP)

Whatever you do [whatever your task may be], work from the soul [that is, put in your very best effort], as [something done] for the Lord and not for men.

Titus 3:14 (AMP)

"And let our own [people really] learn to apply themselves to good deeds (to honest labor and honorable employment), so that they may be able to meet necessary demands whenever the occasion may require and not be living idle and uncultivated and unfruitful lives."

Now using those words and phrases you highlighted summarize why a believer should work with his own hands.

John MacArthur writes that the use of the verb command (parangello) includes "the idea of binding a person to make the proper response to an instruction. The soldier was bound to obey the orders of his superiors; a person involved in a legal matter was bound by the court's orders; a person of integrity was bound by moral principles; a patient was bound to follow his doctor's instruction if he wanted to get well; and a successful writer or speaker was bound by the standards of his craft."⁵

Paul with the authority of apostle writes these things were to be done, "just as we commanded you." When you read "commands" such as these in the Bible . .

- do you "strive eagerly" to comply with the commands?
- do you feel "bound to obey or make the proper response," or do you take them as mere suggestions?
- what should your proper response be?

In verse 12 Paul tells them why they should comply with the commands." What two reasons does he give?

Make a list of steps you can take in your daily walk to gain the respect of "outsiders." Leave room to add new ideas that you will gain when you meet with your group.

You were once an "outsider" before accepting Christ as your Lord and Savior. As an outsider was your interest in Christianity and your coming to Christ influenced by the walk of a Christian? If so, prepare to share your story with your small group.

There are always those who at some point in our Christian lives have influenced or encouraged us in our walk just by the way they live their lives. If there has been such a person in your life, send a card or email thanking them for their example.

Journal Prompt

One of the great weaknesses of contemporary evangelical Christianity is our comparative neglect of Christian ethics, in both our teaching and our practice. In consequence, we have become known rather as people who preach the gospel than as those who live and adorn it.⁶ —John Stott



Read Titus 2:9-10. Adorn (*kosme*ō) is to make beautiful, to embellish. Consider John Stott's words and the words of Paul to Titus, along with what you have studied today—then write to God about being a woman who not only speaks the gospel but lives and adorns it.

day 5

Walk in Light of His Coming

The credibility of the Christian gospel is inseparably linked to
the integrity of the lives of those who proclaim it.7

—John MacArthur

2 Peter 3:11

"Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness."

Dear Sisters,

In the introduction to our week I said that Paul's exhortation to ABOUND MORE and MORE was made in light of the Lord's coming. And on this our final day, I want us to consider what our own WALK should look like in light of His coming.

J. Dwight Pentecost in his book *Prophecy for Today* wrote, "Almost without exception, New Testament references to the coming of Christ are followed by an exhortation to godliness and holy living." The passage of exhortations we looked at this week was book-ended by such references of the Lord's coming (3:11-13; 4:13-17). And in light of the Lord's coming the Thessalonian believers were encouraged to WALK in such a way as to please God. Their WALK was to be one of purity, love and wisdom.

The goal of this WALK is the believer's transformation into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). God's purpose, and that which pleases Him is that we reflect His glory. From the beginning He had a plan as to how to make that happen:

"The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In the fullness of time, God sent His Son to show us His glory and to purchase our redemption. God's heart, as our Father, is for us to come to Him through our acceptance of Jesus Christ as His Son and His death on the cross as purification of our sins. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we become new creations and Christ begins to live within us. Only as we are in Christ, can we hope to be what God intends. His purpose becomes real and transforming as we yield to the process He chooses for us to replicate His character. At great price God purchased our salvation and He continues His sanctifying work in us so that we will be transformed into His image and thereby glorify Him.²—Cynthia Heald

Those of us "in Christ" have been redeemed with a purpose—to glorify God. As we yield to the work of the Spirit in our lives we more and more take on the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18) who is the radiance of God the Father's glory (Hebrews 1:3).

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

COME EXPECTANT: The great need of our time is for people to experience the living reality of God by hearing his word personally and transformingly in Scripture.³ —John Piper

Prayer:

"Father God, Prepare my heart to hear from you this day. May I be open to all You will speak into my life. May I take it to heart and make it my own. As I spend time today reflecting back over the past days' lessons help me to see specific areas in which I need to ABOUND MORE and MORE. Help me to heed the commands of Your Word, and to actively and eagerly strive to comply to them. May it be my joy and my earnest desire to walk in holiness. I want to please You and glorify You in all that I do. Amen"

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 through at least one time. Try reading it from a paraphrase or the Amplified Bible.

Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. —1 Corinthians 10:31

Think on this admonition. WHATEVER you do—do ALL to the glory of God. If you seriously consider this exhortation, how will it affect your walk?

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. —2 Corinthians 3:18

Spend some time reviewing each day of the study. Write down any thoughts or verses that stood out to you. Consider any decisions you might need to make in order to truly give God the glory.

DAY ONE-WALK to PLEASE GOD

DAY TWO-WALK in PURITY

DAY THREE—WALK in LOVE

DAY FOUR-WALK in WISDOM

Journal Prompt

Read the following quote by Oswald Chambers from *My Utmost for His Highest*, and respond in prayer to God.

Am I willing for God to make sanctification as real in me as it is in His Word?

Sanctification means the impartation of the Holy qualities of Jesus Christ. It is His patience, His love, His holiness, His faith, His purity, His godliness, that is manifested in and through every sanctified soul. Sanctification is not drawing from Jesus the power to be holy; it is drawing from Jesus the holiness that was manifested in Him, and He manifests it in me. Sanctification is an impartation, not an imitation. Imitation is on a different line. In Jesus Christ is the perfection of everything, and the mystery of sanctification is that all the perfections of Jesus are at my disposal, and slowly and surly I begin to live a life of ineffable order and sanity and holiness: "Kept by the power of God."

-Oswald Chambers

Sanctification is "Christ in you." It is His wonderful life that is imparted by faith as a sovereign gift of God's grace.⁵

-Oswald Chambers

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by Carla Erland

introduction

1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:11

Hello, my sweet sisters in Christ!

I am so excited to study with you the future hope of resurrection that we have in Christ Jesus because of our faith in Him. Titus 2:13 says that we are "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Peter informs us, "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:13) Take a moment now to circle the following key ideas, as this scripture encompasses Paul's message in our weeks passage.

First, "the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is the "Day of the Lord" or Rapture and we will study in day one about the logistics of this day; order of events, the when, how, and who. Second, using a different color, circle "hope".

In the second day of our study we will explore why those who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have hope and what that means to us. The resurrection of Christ is the center of God's plan for history and is the basis of our hope in the future resurrection of our body. (ESV study Bible commentary).

Ladies, I want you to meditate on this precious promise, claiming this truth and owning it, as you experience that resurrection power through the Holy Spirit that lives in you! I am so excited for us and desire together to look forward to our future in eager expectation! Ok, I'm digressing somewhat. Days three and four are closely aligned as we look at encouragement in the church.

So, sisters, circle "preparing your minds for action." A huge means of this preparation, which is emphasized by Paul and throughout scripture, is encouraging others through the truth of God's word. Paul and Jesus were excellent examples of this, and we will be challenged to receive and do the same.

We build each other up, supporting and spurring on with God's promises and truth. And it is a powerful church in which we witness this, full of the Holy Spirit!

Finally, fellow Christian soldiers, we will study in day 5 how to live sober-minded (circle it!), in a state of alertness for "The Day of the Lord." This is our call for action....no time for complacency!

We arm ourselves with the knowledge of God's plan, encourage each other with this truth, and put on our breastplate of faith and love and our helmet of the hope of salvation.



1 Thessalonians 4:13.

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope."

Pray with me!

"Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for Your word that instructs me with truth and encourages me with the abundant hope of Your precious promises. Thank You for giving me brothers and sisters in Christ that I do not live out this life on my own, as I can receive and give encouragement to others. Please help me to persevere on the path of becoming more and more like You, as I look forward to greater levels of intimacy with You, Jesus, and an eventual blessed reunion in Heaven, with all who have put their trust in You! I implore You, Lord, to draw me into an excitement for Your return that compels me to be desperate for my Bible, as I pour over Your word and enter into deeper levels of prayer.

Just as the apostle John penned, may I also say and believe with all my heart, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20.)



Worship song: So Will I (1,000 X) Hillsong United - if possible watch the lyrics video.

Please read this weeks passage of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 through 5:11.

If you write in your Bible, underline, or jot down words here or in the back of your book, that reflect Paul's four big ideas: inform/ provide instruction, give hope, affirm and encourage the believers and compel them to encourage one another, and command to be alert.

It is important to understand the climate of Thessalonians and their new church in order to make sense of Paul's patient encouragement in his explanation of the coming of Christ to his beloved brothers. The Thessalonians were confused about what would happen to the deceased Christians in their community who had recently died, especially in terms of whether or not they would participate in the 2nd coming of Christ. Paul had prematurely departed without teaching this doctrine, leaving them hopeless and unable to cope with their loss. (ESV SBC)

Jot down your preconceived beliefs of how the Lord Jesus Christ will return and who He will take, how, and the order of events. Perhaps you have not thought much about it, if so, why do you think that is the case?

When you do contemplate His return, what emotions do you feel?

You know what I think? Part of the reason we don't talk about, or perhaps think a lot about these things is:

- 1. Lack of searching out the answers in our Bible and being in unity with other believers regarding end times.
- 2. Apathy due to lack of belief and excitement for this precious promise.
- 3. Lack of "awe" for our Lord and Savior, creator of the universe the one who says, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."
- 4. Fear, not understanding that it is only a day of wrath for unbelievers, but for us who are called "the children of God," a blessed day of salvation.
- 5. Feeling like it has been so long (2,000 years or so) without fulfillment?

Which one of these reasons can you most relate to?

Can you think of a scripture that counters that?

earth.

I can relate to falling into apathy, thinking that it has been sooooo long, and I get overwhelmed with the troubles of the day and urgency for accomplishment. So, I like to read Luke 21:34-36. It really motivates me to keep my head up and be expectant. **Please write that out!**

"But watch yourselves lest your	be		withand cares of
, and that day come upon you		Like a _	And then at the end of vs
36 we are told to pray for the strength to	o stand l	before	

^{*}Remember what our, oh so very patient and merciful Lord tells us through the pen of Peter, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

Some of the terms in which the Bible identifies the Lord's return are: The Coming of the Lord, The Day of the Lord, the Rapture, the 2nd Coming.

A note of clarification: From 1 Thessalonians. 4:13 until ch.5, we are reading about the Rapture of the church. This event ushers in the "The Day of The Lord", (Described in 5:1-3), which is a period of time in which God will be at work in world affairs more directly and dramatically than He has been since.

So, that "Day" begins immediately after the Rapture of the church and ends with the conclusion of the Millennium (fully described in Revelation 6-19), when Satan's dominion is abolished forever. The first seven years of that period is known as the "Great Tribulation." The entire period of "The Day of The Lord" is a period of judgment and blessing. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

The word "Rapture" is interesting to study in more depth. The Greek word "harpazo" means "caught up" and is used in Acts 8:39, 2 Corinthians. 2,4, and Revelation 12:5 - all being caught up or carried away by The Spirit of the Lord or Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. " (KJV)

This verse is the classic defining passage on the great doctrine of the "Rapture of the saints," caught out of this world to be forever with the Lord. (Henry Morris Study Bible)

The big question in the Thessalonians minds, which required clarification, was the fate of those believers who had died, i.e. "fallen asleep", and those still living.

It is very significant that Paul explains to them the details and order in verses 14 and 15, but says, (fill in the blank from vs. 15 (ESV))

"Ear this wa doclars to	wall by a	II .
"For this we declare to y	you, by a	

The IVP commentary says that we have this promise by the word of the Lord Himself which is a promise of vs.14 - (scan vs.14 again.) Also, the ESV SBC states that this "word of the Lord" may indicate that the Lord personally revealed this information to Paul which he continues to relate to the Thessalonians through vs. 17. (2 Corinthians 12:2-4 discusses when he was caught up to paradise and "heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.")

Read John 11:11-14.

What did the disciples think when Jesus said that he would awaken him?

So, death for a Christian was considered being asleep. Also, the metaphor of sleep gains its appropriateness from the fact that all who have died in Christ will "rise" at his return.

Write out 1 Corinthians 15:20 -23

Note vs. .23 "....But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ." That includes those living at the time as well as those who have already died.

Read and write out 2 Corinthians 5:8

The ESV commentary explains that "away from the body and at home with the Lord" refers to the intermediate status between a Christian's death and the resurrection of all believers' bodies on the day Christ returns. Paul is telling us that when we die, though our physical body will be buried here on earth, we can expect that (as a spirit or soul without a body) we will go immediately into the presence of Christ, and will be present with Christ in that condition until the day of resurrection.

Read Luke 23:43.

What did Jesus tell the thief on the cross next to him?

"And he said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, ______ you will be with me in Paradise."

Now, let's talk about that exciting time at the day of resurrection when "The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Also, read 1 Corinthians 15:52.

What does this verse proclaim that Jesus will use to signal the dead to arise?

The command, the angelic voice and the trumpet are interpreted as means of rousing those who are asleep in death and raising them to be with the Lord. Read John 5:25-29 and summarize here:

Let's look at these noises that summon the dead from slumber:

- "Cry of Command"/"Voice of an archangel" = The only archangel identified in the Bible is Michael as seen in Jude 9, and Revelation 12:7-9 which describes Michael fighting in heaven with Satan.
- Trumpets = Trumpets throughout the Old Testament signal the presence of the Lord and is also associated with battle.
 - Exodus 19:16. "a loud trumpet blast from the mountain as Moses brought the people out of camp to meet God,"
 - 1 Chronicles 16:6 "priests that were blowing trumpets before the ark of the covenant of God,"

Psalm 47:5
Joel 2:1
Zechariah 9:14.
According to 1 Thessalonians. 4:16-17, describe what will happen, in what order?
King Jesus will be calling the living and the dead to himself as He awaits a delegation of his people to meet the Lord in the air where he will establish his kingdom of justice and peace. It's a picture of a group of citizens going out from a city to meet a visiting dignitary and accompany him back.
(IVP New Bible Commentary) According to the Henry Morris study Bible, we can picture a battle in the air which is Satan's domain (Ephesians 2:2) and a shout of military assault with the host of heaven under the command of archangel Michael.
Personalizing: Imagine yourself witnessing these events, from the first "Cry of Command." Describe the scene, what sights, sounds do you experience, and how/what might you feel, think, and do?
O.K. Ladies, let's make sure we have the order correct. Briefly Diagram or list the order of happenings upon the Lord's signal of return.
First:
i not.
Second:
Third:
Imminence: Finally, for this first day, I would like to touch on this important concept of being expectant and viewing the Day of the Lord as imminent by looking at verse 15. First, define the word "imminent?"
What are some synonyms?
I gathered impending, close at hand, and near.

You can look up these last three scriptures for extra credit.



Paul's use of "we" - "we which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord......" Henry Morris (KJV study Bible) writes that it is very significant that at this point in Paul's relatively brief years of ministry, he considered it very likely that he himself would be living when Christ returned. This divinely inspired prediction proves that the Rapture has always been imminent, not contingent on other events that must come first. That is why Jesus urged His disciples always to be watchful and ready for His return. (Matthew 24:42,44)

This Day will come suddenly...How and when?

From 1 Thessalonians. 5:2-3, write down the analogies that are used to describe the sudden nature of God's return.

Thief in the night: throughout the New Testament the thief simile is used to suggest unexpectedness and unwelcomeness.

Apply: Explain these truths to at least one person this week, making sure to inform who will be raptured, when (could it be imminent?) and the order.

Discuss with Jesus your feelings about His return and ask Him to increase your "awe" for Him, that you would be so excited to see his face: 1 John 3:2,3 "Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is and everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies Himself as He is pure."

day 2

Our Future Hope Rests all on the Resurrection!

1 Thessalonians 5:9 - 10

"For God has not destined us for wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him."

Pray with me!

"Dear Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross and rising to Heaven that I would live with You forever, and while living here on earth may experience all the benefits of the Holy Spirit that lives in me! Help me to live in this Resurrection power every day, realizing that it is the same power that raised You from the dead! Increase my faith! Help me to fully take in this amazing power that has nothing to do with my own power. Help me to understand how this power is exceedingly greater than anything I can imagine. Increase my awareness that this power is given because you love me and desire a relationship with me. May I trust You and surrender to you today! Amen."



Worship song: Resurrection Power, Chris Tomlin, My Hope is in You, Aaron Shust (beautiful video, but don't watch with your kids.)

When I read the end of 1 Thessaloians. 4:13 - "that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope," and understand the importance of Paul's explanation of details of the resurrection, I think of Jesus' disciples reactions immediately following His death on the cross.

As Jesus predicted in John 16:32, "Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone." Mark 14:27 states, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."

Although they lived with him for three years listening to the events to come, they really could not take in the truth until they witnessed the Resurrection and His return. The disciples of Christ lived for three days in grief and despair.

Read Luke 24:13-26.

Why do Cleopas and his friend appear sad?

What had they hoped for?

How did the women amaze them?

What does Jesus say in vs 25 and 26 is their problem?

"And He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and	to	all that the
prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should s	uffer these thi	ngs and
into His?"		
Are we also slow of heart to believe all that the scriptures lay out for u	ıs?	
List any suggestions you may have or action steps you can take to or understanding of the scriptures.	o increase you	r recall and/

Jesus proceeds, in Luke 24, to unravel the scriptures for them in order that they would have correct information. That sounds a little like Paul's desire for the Thessalonians to have correct information that leads to hope, especially having to do with the Resurrection.

Grieving in itself is not wrong, as many life situations such as sickness and death bring about this healthy emotion. However, grieving without correct information in a hopeless manner is truly sad.

Back to Luke 24, check out the two disciples' response in verses 31-34. "And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?' And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Wow! It sure appears that hope returned to the disciples when they were able to "see" the truth!

Now remember, the disciples of Christ did not yet have the Holy Spirit residing in them! Christ's several reappearances were aimed to remind, embolden and reunite them until His final ascension and giving of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4) Also, Jesus reminds them that upon his death and resurrection the Father will send His Holy Spirit. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26)

The Holy Spirit: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

List all of the benefits of the Holy Spirit that lives in you?

Check out these! Well worth the time if you can write them out.
 Intercedance and guidance: Romans 8:26
The fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22,23
• Wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and fear of the Lord: Isaiah 11:2
Truth: 1 Corinthians 2:13
 Helper, convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment: John 16:7-15
God's love poured into our hearts: Romans 5:5
Comforter: 2 Corinthians 1:3,4
Freedom: 2 Corinthians 3:17
Did you get hope?
Fill in the blanks from Romans 15:13 (ESV) "May the God of fill you with all
and in believing, so that by the power of the you
may abound in "
This is our power source ladies! Do you remember your life before putting your trust in Christ? Briefly describe.

Our life without Jesus: Ephesians 2:12 "Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

Our life with Jesus: Ephesians 2:13,14 (ESV)

"But now in _____ you who once were far off have been brought near by the ____ of ____ . For ____ is our peace."

Our living hope in the Resurrection!

Write in the rest of 1 Thessalonians 4:14 and circle "If" or "since"

"Since we believe that

It is integral for our hope that we take in this as a declaration that there is no other condition than belief that Jesus died and rose again in order to participate in the resurrection and rapture. All born again Christians, having real faith in the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Christ will be caught up; to be with Christ when he comes just as all believers who died in faith. (Henry Morris KJV Study Bible.)

Read 1 Peter 1:3-6 and circle all words/phrases that reflect WHAT was given to us, HOW or WHY, and by WHOM.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials."

Go back and underline the adjectives for our inheritance.

Because of this great promise, what does Peter say should be our response?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-21. Take notes of what is most meaningful to you.

Which verses do you think would have been the most meaningful to the Thessalonians in answer to Paul's observation of some who lost hope over their confusion of the Resurrection of the dead in light of the recent deaths in their community?

Romans 8:11 - "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."

Based on that Romans verse, what does resurrection power look like?

Read Galatians 2:20 (ESV) and fill in:

"I have been _____ with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but ____ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the ____ I live by ____ in the Son of God, who ____ me and gave ____ for me."

The devastating results of sin and The Fall to ourselves and all creation = longing for the Lord's return!

Romans 8:19-23 - Not only do we wait for God's returning to Earth for us, but so does the entire creation! "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

Romans 8:24 - 25 Fill in:
" For in this we were saved. Now that is seen is not For who
for what he sees? But if we for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."
How many times do we read the word "hope" in these two passages?
What are we waiting for?
How should we wait for it?
John 16:33

Which verse or verses that we have looked at, or another, gives you the most hope?

tion. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

And don't forget ladies, as we will talk about in day 5, we are commanded to arm ourselves with the helmet of our hope of salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8) as we await the Lord's return. I pray that the scriptures we have read enhance the reality of this great promise, flooding us with hope.

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribula-

Apply: Practice sharing with someone the meaning of the resurrection of Christ and the amazing hope of our resurrection as a result. Also, what action steps can you take this week to allow this hope to motivate your faithfulness to Jesus?

Journal Prompt

Thank Jesus for the peace of knowledge that He will fulfill His promise to return to earth for His people, and that you will be reunited with all of your loved ones who have died in Christ. Ask God to get you excited over Romans 8:38 - 39;

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Affirmation and Encouragement in the Church

day 3

John 17:22

"The glory that you have given me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one."

Pray with me!

"Thank you Heavenly Father for Your church! May we be the body of believers worthy of Your Holy calling of embodying the bride of Christ, that we would reflect Your love to each other and to the world so that they may come to believe in Your name. Help us to be a church that loves, serves, and works together, never compromising on the Biblical standard of truth. Amen."



Worship song: Make Us One, Jesus Culture

Paul's earnest desire to create a strong church according to the Truth and Spirit of Christ is a great lesson to how we can function in our church.

Encourages/supports/affirms: Paul affirmed and encouraged this beginning church made up of many new believers. (1 Thessalonians 1:9) They were needy of it due to the apostolic, divisive climate in which they lived, not long after being saved from the numerous idols being worshiped in their city. The recent deaths, persecutions and sufferings produced in them a welcome reception of Paul's loving words and building up of their church body.

Paul affirms the church members by acknowledging their common belief in the truth; they believe in the resurrection and they have an awareness of the imminence of the Lord's return. He identifies with them as "brothers," reminding them, "But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you." Paul's calling them brothers emphasized their equality of standing before God despite their knowledge deficiency. He confirms their status and destiny as children of light, those who belong to the realm of God and his salvation.

Which of these reminders would most establish them in unity?

What would this mean to the Thessalonians and how might it motivate them?

Paul tells the Thessalonians two times in our week's passage to encourage one another: the last verse in chapter 4 and the last verse in chapter 5. "Therefore encourage one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:18, and "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11. Notice the affirmation in vs. 11.

So, let us apply this teaching to our relationship with our church!

Getting personal: In your journal, write a short letter to your church informing them, of who they are in Christ, affirming your commonalities and strengths (think of various ministries your church performs, ie..missions, outreach, care/hospitality, poor/needy, children's, teaching, etc.)

Do you identify with them as sisters and brothers?

Please write out Galatians 6:9 - 10 (ESV)

Underline words/phrases, "not grow weary" of "doing "good"....."do not give up." What does the Bible say will happen?

What are some possible results of doing good?

Please note ways you already do this.

What is an example of how you can do more of this.

Read Colossians 3:14-17, noting characteristics of harmony in the church. Did you notice the word "thankful" and demonstrations of thankfulness at least 3 times in this passage?

What are other key words you noticed?

Firm foundation of truth: Paul's clear Biblical teaching about the Lord's return was designed to produce comfort and encouragement as well as avoid fear and divisiveness. A strong church is unified by uncompromising and bold teaching of the truth about God's character and who we are as God's children. With that said, let us look more deeply at 1 Thessalonians 5:5: "For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness." The term "children of the day" ac-

cording to the ESV SB, links the concepts of "light" and "day" together because Jesus is the "light of the world." (John 8:12, 9:5) But Christians are also those who are called to live a godly life as people who "belong to the day"(1 Thessalonians 5:8) and who are destined to inherit salvation on the "The Day of the Lord" when Christ, (the Light of the world) will return in power and great glory.

Also, another look at this term is that Christians live in a different sphere of life from non-Christians, it is the difference between day and night. Thus, as sons of light and day, we have illumination, and live in a realm characterized by light, warmth, and growth.

Read how the Bible identifies our lives before Christ in Ephesians 2:1-3 and 12. Please summarize with key words.

Prior to knowing Christ, what did your life look like in the darkness?

How is it characterized now in the light?

A firm knowledge of truth allows us to detect false teaching/teachers or doctrines in the church. Jesus warns us, "And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray." (Matthew 24:11) Also, in Matthew 7:15, he warns, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." Paul exclaims in 2 Corinthians 11:3, "But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

Finally, read Colossians 2:8, filling in the blank.

"See to it	that no one takes you by	and	, according
to	, according to the	of the	, and not according to
	<i>u</i>		

So, what do we need to be on the lookout for?

Take action: Let's look at Colossians 3:14-17 regarding encouragement and harmony in the church. List out what this scripture teaches about producing such harmony. Underline vs. 16. That's why we need to stick closely to our Bibles ladies!

How do you let the word of Christ dwell in you richly?

"Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all and
, with, bearing with one another in, eager to maintain the
or the Spirit in the bond of"
Now, list out vertically the words you completed and rank according to which qualities have the most power to positively influence your church; or home for that matter.
Which one of these, or more in my case, can you ask Jesus to work on in you?
Like Mindedness in Christ: From Ephesians 4:4-6, how many times do you count the word "one"?
Read carefully and list the words that follow "one."
From vs. 6, our one Father is all and all and all. Isn't this the main thing that connects and bonds all of us? In fact, God sees the Christian church as "one body" wherever its separate congregations may be found throughout the world. Take a moment to ask God for His divine help to appreciate each other's uniqueness.
Gifts given for the benefit of the church: God has given each of us gifts according to His grace.
Read Ephesians 4:7 (ESV)
"But grace was given to according to the measure of
Please read Ephesians. 4:11-16 for Paul's excellent description of how Jesus equips the saints (all us Christians) for the work of ministry. This passage is packed with the purpose, extent and breadth of the outcome of these gifts. And, by the way, we will soon look at other gifts given because this list is not exhaustive of all spiritual gifts.
After carefully reading twice, please note the following:
The purpose of these gifts Until whenor what is His ultimate goal?

Unity in the body of Christ: Read Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV) fill in.

From vs. 16, describe how Paul uses the analogy of the physical anatomical body working in unison properly.

Read	Romans	12:4-8.	What n	new gift	s do	you	read i	n R	omans	that	were	not	included	in c	uc
prior	passage	?													

*A word of cautio	n: Romans 12:	3 (ESV) Write	out			
"For by the	given to	me I say to e	veryone amo	ng you no	t to think of h	imself more
than	he ought to th	nink, but to th	ink with		, each a	ccording to
the		_ that God ha	s assigned. "	,		
How would you	summarize wl	hat we should	d be "cautiou	ıs" of?		
We need to be hu guard for the atta			_	_		-
Okay, I can not er in 1 Corinthians 1			•	-		
"If I give all that I	I have, but hav	/e not	, I gain _		. All gifts will ו	oass away, but
will	never	So now			, and	abide, but
the greatest of th	hese is					
Early days of chu gerly. Read Acts 2	-	odel: Sharing t	the simple tru	ith of the (Gospel boldly, 1	freely, and ea-
What was Peter	's straight for	ward messag	e?			
How many souls	came to savi	ng faith in Ch	ırist in a day	?		
Example of love, supported each	•	d sharing. Rea	ad Acts 2:42-	47. List all	of the ways t	he believers
Their heart attitu						
he	arts,	God and	d having	wi	th all the peop	le. And the
Lord added to th	eir number da	ay by day thos	se who were	being save	ed."	



What do you think was the relationship between a thankful and generous heart and people coming to salvation. What kind of community would that create?

What kind of relationships would you expect to see?

What kind of witness were they to the surrounding culture?

Write down your assessment of the health of your church and the church as a whole. Make a list of the gifts that God has given you. How are you using those to benefit the church?

What are additional ideas you have on contributing to the welfare of your church?

Thank Jesus for His church and discuss with Him whether we as a church body are reflecting His Holy vision of the church.

Encourage One Another



1 Thessalonians 5:18 (KJV)

"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."

Pray with me!

"Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me so much that you gave your life for me. Please help me to fully love your people, that You would abide in me and Your love would be perfected in me. Teach me how to encourage Your people in new ways in word and deed. Amen."



Worship songs: With Every Act of Love, Jason Gray; Speak Life, Toby Mac

This week's passage, in fact this whole letter, is infused with Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonian believers. In the vein of Paul's practical advice and encouragement to the Thessalonians, we will look this week at encouragement practically in terms of how we do that individually, with "one another." Paul ended this section of scripture with a practical exhortation that arose naturally from what he had explained. His readers were to encourage and build up (edify) one another. His own encouragement and edification in this letter were not enough. This new instruction needed constant repetition and emphasis.

It was to be added to the body of truth they already had received, and as they were encouraging each other in their meetings and in private conversations about other revealed truth they were to include this great truth as well. Believers do not need to be hearing something new all of the time, but they often do need to remind themselves of what they already know so that they do not forget it. (The Bible knowledge Commentary, Walvoord, Zuck)

Can you relate to this? I certainly can and have to admit that I get overwhelmed and busy in my life and responsibilities. So, it is so helpful to be reminded of scripture that highlights the importance to God of encouraging His people. When we encourage, we are loving.

Please write out the most important commandment from Matthew 22:37-39. For emphasis, underline in vs. 39, "love your neighbor as yourself." And remember who our neighbor is. When Jesus was asked this question, he gave the "parable of the Good Samaritan."

Luke 10:30-37 Please read it. So which of the three men did Jesus point out as proving to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? (Hint...think MERCY)

Using a dictionary(Google works great), define the word "encourage." List as many synonyms as possible.

Three of my favorite synonyms = hearten, cheer, revitalize.

Paul was an amazing encourager. He serves as a model and challenge for us to practice this gift of the Spirit. Paul shows us how encouragement not only appears as life giving, uplifting words, service, but also education, correction, and exhortation.

Encouragement as exhortation = def. (Google) An address or communication emphatically urging someone to do something.

Read Hebrews 10:24,25 (ESV) and fill in the	ne blank.			
"And let us consider how to	to		and	
, not neglecting to	together, as is the habit of s	some, but	o	ne
another, and all the more as you see the	Dav drawing near."			

My ESV commentary explains that to "stir up" is to provoke, and we are to view Christian perseverance as also a community endeavor. And community encouragement toward perseverance requires meeting together! Isn't that awesome! Have you ever heard someone say, "I don't need to go to church to be a Christian; it's what's in my heart that is important." I sure have. In fact, I may have been one of those people years ago. What part of this verse could you share with someone in order to counter this idea? Summarize as if you are talking with them.

Consider Hebrews 12:1 - 2. I view this sort of encouragement as motivation to persevere. As you write it out, underline the words that feel motivating. Remember that the "cloud of witnesses" (ESV) are those saints listed throughout the previous chapter 11 who died, living life faithfully in God, ie.. the Christ to come.

Who are we to look to?

What is the adjective phrase used to describe Him?

What does the scripture say that He looked to as He endured the cross?

Personal relations	ships: Read	Hebrews 12:14,1	5 (ESV) and fill ir	າ:	
"Strive for	with	, and	d for the	without	which no one will
	-	See to it that	t no one fails to	obtain the _	
; that no	o root of	sprin	gs up and cause	es, a	and by it many be-
come	"				
	our ministry			•	I nature). I love the I more than those I
Summarize the control of the holiness and God		•	•		hers experiencing tterness, huh?
	he bud" (as Bible claims	my grandma us s that many bec	ed to say) before		watch carefully so nto a plant, sort of
"We who are		have an	to bear with	the	of the,
and not to	ourselv	es. Let each of	us please his	for his_	, to
	. For	did not ple	ease himself, but	as it is written	, 'The reproaches
of those who repr	oached you	fell on me."			
•	ing selfishly st is the supr	to satisfy their o	own desires. The	Christian life ce	te and support the enters on strength-
Please write out E	Ephesians 4	:1 - 2			

Underline how we are to walk, which the Bible identifies counts us as worthy to be called a Christian, or to drive in the point further, to be worthy of Christ dying for us!

Which of these characteristics do you struggle most with?

Talk to Him about it and ask for His divine help. Look up the following scriptures on asking God and receiving. It is so encouraging to see that He really wants to give us what is good for us - He promises! And giving us more of these fruits of the spirit are definitely good for us!

Just jot down a paraphrase or the whole scripture.

Matthew 7:7
Matthew 21:22
John 14:14
James 4:2
Ephesians 4:29-32 is a wonderful description of how we should only use words and behavior that 'is good for building up" and "gives grace to those who hear." Also, note a very good motivation for doing so: "and do not the Holy Spirit.
Please list all of the word descriptions in the following categories:
Behavior to increase:
Behavior to decrease/eliminate:
Read 1 Peter 3:1-4 and write down what you see as the commands and the results.
Now, fill in the blanks: "they may be won without a by the of their
wives, when they see your and conduct. What will these men be won
to? "But let your adorning be the hidden person of the with the
beauty of a and spirit, which in God's sight is very



Even if you are not married, you can use these words to encourage women in your life.

Write down some possible outcomes in a family, (to husband, children, general home environment), when the wife practices "respectful and pure conduct" and a "gentle and quiet spirit?"

The Sermon on the Mount: The last scripture to look at together today is a review of Jesus' beautiful words of encouragement to His disciples.

Please read these Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-11 Write down which one/s bring you the most comfort/encouragement.

Identify those people or situations God has sent to you to encourage you. It may be in terms of praise, spurring on, life giving words, teaching, or even correction.

Thank God for His intervention and tender care. Are there any steps of action you will take as a result?

Next, identify at least one person in your life that needs encouragement and plan how you will administer it.

Write about which Bible verses encourage you the most and identify any others that were not reviewed.

day 5

Be Sober Minded and Alert for The Day of The Lord

1 Thessalonians 5:6

"So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us be alert and sober."

Pray with me!

"Dear Heavenly Father, I am so full of gratitude for your Word that instructs, illuminates and prophesied Your return for Your people who have been faithful to You. Thank you for Your powerful plan to bring justice and a final end to sin and its resulting destruction. You have given me everything I need to be informed and prepared. Please help me to be alert and not bogged down by the cares of this life. May I daily put on the armor You gave me, "the breastplate of faith and love" and "the helmet of the hope of salvation." Amen."



Worship song: Surrounded (Fight My Battles), Josh Baldwin/Bethel Worship

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11. Paul teaches that we need to first know God's plan, be armed with the truth, be sober and alert, and then encourage each other with these words.

Sober and alert: We are warned to avoid being like those who are "asleep" or those who "get drunk at night." The Bible Knowledge commentary states that unbelievers are neither awake nor alert to these spiritual realities. Rather they are asleep and controlled by forces outside themselves - like those who are drunk, which renders them unable to respond as they should.

These are the normal characteristics of those who live in the sphere of night. According to the ESV SB, to sleep is to be morally and spiritually disengaged, and/or living without a consciousness of the coming day. Thankfully the Bible gives us a "heads up," and even instructions on how to protect ourselves.

The Bible identifies an additional reason for being watchful; so that we may not be ashamed. (1 John 2:28) Just as we previously looked at Luke 21:34-36 as inspiration to be expectant of the Lord's return, notice Jesus' warning in verse 36: "But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." "To stand before" is referring to the ability to stand up tall in confidence with head up.

Look up 1 John 2:28 and fill in:			
"And now, little children,	in him, so tha	t when he	we may have
and not shrink from hi	m in	at his coming."	
Write out Psalm 34:5 (ESV)			
What does this scripture claim will	prevent our fac	es from ever being	ı ashamed?
Command for action: We must live in rages all around us. We fight for the and putting on the spiritual armor the	truth, rejecting th	ne lies of the enemy	, claiming God's promises
Write out 1 Peter 5:8.			
In this verse, Paul tells us to be	and	Who does h	e say our adversary is?
What does he compare him to?			
What is Satan's goal?			

Putting on our armor; the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of the hope of salvation: 1 Thessalonians 5:8

Paul frequently uses the metaphor of a soldier to illustrate a Christian persevering in this life. It is helpful to understand the warlike Roman culture of the time. A Roman breastplate covered a soldier from his neck to his waist and protected most of his vital organs. That is what Christians' faith and love do. Faith in God protects inwardly and love for people protects outwardly. These two graces cannot be separated; if one believes in God (faith) he will also love other people. These attitudes equip Christians to stand ready for the Rapture. Furthermore, the hope of salvation guards their heads from attacks on their thinking.

The salvation they hope for is deliverance of the wrath to come at the Lord's return. (BKC)

1 Thessalonians 5:9 "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."

Read Isaiah 59:17 (ESV). The Lord is portrayed as a warrior wearing armor.

"For He put on	as a	, and a	
on His head;	He put on the g	arments of vengeance for clot	hing and was clad
with zeal as a cloak."			
The spiritual armor in the and review)	Christian warfar	e was greatly amplified in Ephe	esians 6:11-17 (read
How is the breastplate d	lescribed?		
The helmet?			
Fill in from Romans 13:12.			
"The night is far spent, t	he day is at han	d. Therefore let us cast off the	e works of,
and let us put on the arm	or of	_•	
Think about that last word	d that encompas	ses the whole armor. Why that	one word?
Could it be that putting or	n our armor, is pu	utting on Jesus, the "Light of the	e world?"
Read 2 Corinthians 6:7.			
What does this scripture	equate the pov	ver of God with?	
Christian characteristics;	faith, hope, and	hroughout the New Testament l love. Please explore with me e NKJV version for all of these.	the following scriptures
Colossians 1:4 - 5			
"Since we heard of your	in (Christ Jesus and of your	for all the saints;
because of the	which is laid	up for you in heaven, of which	you heard before in the
word of the truth of the g	ospel."		

Romans 5:1-5 write out only the lines that include faith, hope, and love.

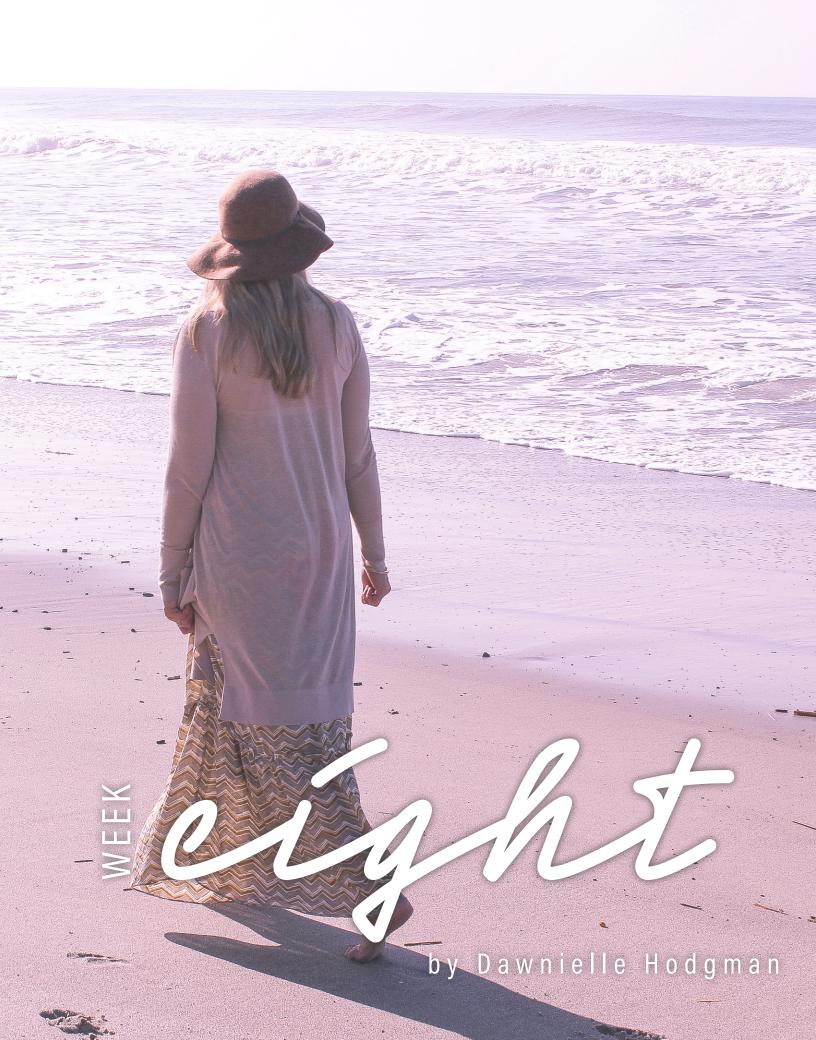
Galatians 5:5 - 6			
"For we through the Spirit eagerly wait fo	r the of right	eousness by	For in
Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor unci	rcumcision avails anyt	hing, but faith workii	ng through
Where do you see those same three word	ls in Ephesians 4:2-5?	Summarize.	
And in 1 Thessalonians 1:3?			
Hebrews 6:10-12			
"For God is not unjust to forget your work	cand labor of	which you have	shown to-
ward His name in that you have ministered	ed to the saints, and o	lo minister. And we d	desire that
each one of you show the same diligence			
you do not become sluggish, but imitate th	nose who through	and patience	inherit the
promises."			
Hebrews 10:22-24			
"Let us draw near with a true heart in full a	assurance of	, having our hearts s _l	prinkled
from an evil conscience and our bodies w	ashed with pure water	Let us hold fast the	confes-
sion of our without wavering, for	or He who promised is	faithful. And let us o	onsider
one another in order to stir up	and good works."		
1 Peter 1:3-8,21,22. Please fill in only verses	21,22.		
"Who through Him believe in God, who	raised Him from the d	ead and gave Him g	lory, so
that your and	are in God. Since you	ı have purified your	souls in
obeying the truth through the Spirit in sin	cere of th	e brethren, love one	another
fervently with a pure heart."			
Apply: Review your answers this week. What is your biggest takeaway?			

Check your Bible and prayer time. Do you have intentional times? If not, consider scheduling in uninterrupted times with Jesus where you can further your intimacy and increase your Bible knowledge. Consider picking any meaningful scripture and writing at least one Bible verse on an index card and memorizing throughout the week.

From a reading of 2 Peter 3:10 - 11 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?"



Discuss with God how you feel about His description of His powerful return and answer this final question.



Looking Back



Prayer:

"Oh Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer! Thank you for Your Word that's alive and active today. As I jump into this letter from Paul once again, please teach me, change me, transform me from the inside out. Father, open my eyes to new things this week. Convict me in the areas that I need to grow in. Encourage me in the areas where I feel defeated. Reveal new pieces of yourself to me in Your Word this week."



Worship: Your Word, Hillsong Worship

Read 1 Thessalonians all the way through.

Imagine that you are a part of the Thessalonian church receiving this letter from Paul. What part would have encouraged you? What section would have challenged you? Now that you've studied almost the entire letter, is there anything that makes more sense now than when you began? Is there anything that still has you scratching your head saying, huh?

This week we will be focusing on 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22. Paul is giving his final instructions to the church, calling them to love, act justly and do the will of God. Paul is wonderfully practical as he lays out three areas he wants the church to respond in.

- 1. How to act toward the leaders of a church.
- 2. How to live with other believers, whether at home, at work, or wherever.
- 3. How to live toward God and respond to the situations where he puts them.

Of the three areas listed above, which are you most looking forward to studying and why? Ask the Lord to uncover new things to you this week. Lay out before the Lord your desires in regards to what you hope to glean from His Word.

Honor those who lead you



Prayer:

"Lord, I want to honor, respect and love you wholeheartedly. Show me the areas of my life where I'm putting my own comfort and opinions before obedience and sacrifice to You. Reveal any areas in my thought life that need refining. Unveil any hidden sin in regards to my thoughts about Your bride, the church, and those leading her to your throne. You are calling me to love in all areas of my life and I desire to obey you in this."



Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 (NLT)

Summarize this section of the letter in 2-3 sentences.

What do you think Paul's purpose is in including these details in his letter?

Let's go back and read v. 12-13. Write these verses in your journal. Highlight any words that stand out to you.

Who is Paul addressing in verse 12? (NLT)

"We ask , brothers and sisters..."

Let's be clear before we jump in, Paul is speaking directly to YOU. Every letter that Paul writes ends with some practical applications to regular life situations of the truth that he has just laid out. So, take a seat, and hold on. Things are about to get personal.

The word, "ask" in this verse means "to as authoritarian, intolerant, or overbearing		_
In verse 12, what is Paul asking YOU to o	do?	
"those who are in	the Lord's work. They	among you and
give you"		
In the verse above, circle the word, "The spiritual guidance?	y". Who are , "<u>they"</u> that work l	hard among us and give us
What does Paul go on to say in verse 1	13?	
In the wise words of Jackie Hill-Perry, " when we've been talking about them in a thought."	•	
Jackie nails it on the head for some of us. sung and word preached as if our job de aren't off the hook with our bad attitude love.	epended on it. It's not enough to	just show up at church. We
Who are the spiritual leaders in your li	ife?	
List some synonyms and antonyms for t	:he following words:	
<u>Synonyms</u>	<u>Antonyms</u>	
Honor:		
Respect:		
Wholehearted:		

Look up Hebrews 13:7, 17. In regards to our spiritual leaders, what new insights do you gain from these verses?
Who are these spiritual leaders accountable to (v.17)?
Though they may not affect you directly, God has called spiritual leaders to serve where you live and around the globe. There are some right in your own backyard that you may have some opinions about. Paul is calling us as believers to honor, respect and wholeheartedly love those who are leading His bride.
What does that look like in a practical way?
Are there any spiritual leaders in your life that are hard to honor and respect? Why or why not? Have you ever been a part of a church where this was hard for you? If so, how did you handle it?
Which of these words is God calling you to take hold of today? How can you grow in this word towards those leading you in the church? What specific actions do you need to take in obedience as you think about those leading your spiritually?

"I don't believe God is concerned with preserving your reputation at the expense of His glory. He will expose you to keep you and to remind you of who He is... lest your pride lead you to forget"

- Jackie Hill Perry



With this in mind, respond to the Lord either in regards to your own heart or the heart of those leading you. Pray that God would work, change, restore all things for His glory!

Uphold the Bride of Christ



Prayer:

"Father, open my eyes to the role I play in the church. Unveil my eyes so that I may see your people in a new and fresh way. Lord, I desperately want to obey you with every piece of my life. Show me how to warn, encourage and care for your people. Lord, reveal any pride that I may have so that I can serve from a place of great understanding and humility."



DIG DEEPER: Read this section of Scripture in two or three different translations. Write out all the different words used.



Worship: I Surrender, Hillsong Worship

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 (NLT) and write these verses in your journal.

In your own words, summarize what Paul is saying. Who is he addressing in these passages?

After addressing you, his brothers and sisters, what strong word does Paul use before laying out his list?

Look up the word urge in the dictionary and write the definition below.

Friend, Paul is pressing, pushing, hastening you to respond to some things in verse 14. List them below.
those who are
those who are
Take of those who are
Be with
For these three groups of needy people, Paul prescribes different approaches: "Warn the lazy, encourage the timid, take tender care of the weak, be patient with them all."
Warn/admonish (noutheteo) — direct and forthright exhortation to change!
• Encouragement (paramutheo) — an emotionally empathetic alignment that strengthens
 Tender care/help (antecheo) — a closer attachment and coming under to lift up
Now, let's dig in, one by one.
Warn those who are lazy (NLT)
Other translations use the words idle or unruly to describe lazy. Write out the definitions for these words below.
Idle:
Unruly:
Lazy:
Shortly after Paul had founded the church at Thessalonica, the rumor had spread that the day of the Lord was at hand. Because of this people stopped working and began living a life of idleness. Though they weren't working, these people still expected to be fed by those who were working hard.
What does God's Word say about work?
Proverbs 10:4:
1 Corinthians 10:31:

Colossians 3:23:
2 Thessalonians 3:10-12:
"Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak." (NLT)
What does it look like to be timid?
Let's look at what God says about caring for the weak/timid. Look up the following verses and summarize what is being said. Galatians 6:9-10:
Colossians 3:12:
Romans 15:1:
"Be patient with everyone."
Do you see what I did here? I underlined the word, "everyone" just so you wouldn't miss it. I don't know about you but this one hits me right in the chest.
How is patience described in the dictionary?
Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. As you read, write below what words pierce your heart? Why?
Who in your life is God calling you to love with this kind of patience? What strategic steps can you take this week to respond in obedience?

See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people."
How do the following verses reinforce this teaching? Matthew 6:38-42
Matthew 7:12
Luke 6:27-31
1 Peter 3:9
Romans 12:17-18
"Love your enemies" is very contrary to what the world teaches. Why do you think God is so adamant about this command? What do we accomplish when we love those who are hard to love?
The beautiful truth to those who have been wounded deeply is that God is more than merciful. He is also just. In light of "turning the other cheek," what comfort can be found in Romans 12:19?

"You're never too high and mighty to serve the low and weak because the highest and mightiest stooped down for you."

- John Piper



This week we've been called to warn the lazy, encourage the timid, take tender care of the weak and to be patient with them all. Search your own heart and with great humility ask the Lord if there are any areas where you are lazy, timid or weak. Ask Him, the great comforter, to encourage and take tender care of you as you pursue His ways above your own.



Prayer:

"Lord, open my eyes and my ears today to hear the truths that you want to uncover. Father, I don't want to miss a thing. If I am rushing through this, slow me down. If my mind is muddled, make a clear path. I want to be transformed by the washing of your Word. I don't want to leave my time with you unchanged. I am yours. Do a radical work in me."



Worship: While I Wait, Lincoln Brewster

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 (NLT) and write it in your journal.

Surely at some point you've asked, "God, what is your will for my life?" Look closely at this portion of Scripture, what is Paul's answer?

In the wise words of Jen Wilkin, God's will is not linked to the question, "what should I do?" The best thing for us to ask is, "who should I be?" Paul is pointing to this truth in these verses.

Go back to the verse you wrote above and circle the words, always, never and all.

I don't know about you but I'm definitely not doing these three things continuously. Let's remember for a moment who Paul is writing to. **What message do you think Paul is trying to get across to his readers?** (this includes you, the reader.)

Paul is not a stranger to adversity. He models for us over and over again what it looks like to rejoice always, never stop praying and give thanks in all circumstances.

Read the verses below and record how Paul views adversity.

Romans 5:3-5

2 Corinthians 12:10
Philippians 3:10
Colossians 1:24
According to these verses, what good things come from the hardships that God allows?
In her book, <i>In His Image</i> , Jen Wilkin shares that "God's will for our lives is that we conform to the image of ChristGod is holy, loving, just, good, merciful, gracious, faithful, truthful, patient, and wise." With this in mind, why can we always be joyful and be thankful in ALL circumstances?
God isn't saying to be thankful FOR your circumstances but IN your circumstances. What hard things are you walking through right now? In light of what we've uncovered today, how might you change your prayers about your circumstances?
Describe a time when God used a circumstance to sanctify you, make you more like Him. Did you fight the process or willingly follow?

"I never heard anyone say, 'the really deep lessons of life have come through times of ease and comfort."

- John Piper



Oh! Isn't that the truth! My friend, comfort is not our goal. Pleasure is not our friend. These two deceive us. It's the hard stuff that brings about change. It's the uncomfortable that pushes us out of our seats and makes us strive for something better. Let's spend some time praying today and thanking God for ALL of our circumstances. List them out one by one. Pray about them and then give thanks for them by name.



Prayer:

"Lord, fan into flame a deeper awareness of the power of Your Spirit. I want to live in a way that I'm keenly aware of what You're doing and what you're calling me to do in response. Father, awaken me to any areas of my life where I am stifling the work of Your Spirit. Reveal any hidden sins or broken theology. Holy Spirit I desire an awakening! I stand in awe of You!"



Worship: Awakening- Hillsong Worship

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 (NLT) and write it in your journal.

Now, in your own words, summarize what Paul is saying below.

"Do not stifle the Holy Spirit" (NLT)

"Do not quench the Holy Spirit" (NIV)

"Do not suppress the Holy Spirit" (MSG)

What kinds of things in our lives would stifle, quench, suppress the Holy Spirit?

Read Ephesians 4:30 (NLT) and record what it says below.

Ephesians 4:31 goes on to make a short list of the type of things that would bring sorrow to the Holy Spirit. List them below.

Instead of these things, what does Paul go on to say in Ephesians 4:32-5:1?
What is the opposite of stifle, quench, suppress?
Describe a time when you experienced an acute awareness of quenching the Holy Spirit. What was the cause? What was the outcome?
What follows Paul's instruction to not quench the Holy Spirit in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22?
Let's take a look at what the Message says to gain a clearer understanding of the text:
"Don't stifle those who have a word from the Master. On the other hand, don't be gullible. Check out everything, and keep only what's good. Throw out anything tainted with evil."
Evidently, some in the church at Thessalonica despised the gift of prophecy. Now, why would they do that?
What is the purpose of prophecy according to the following verses?
Acts 15:32
1 Corinthians 14:1-5
1 Corinthians 14:26-33
Where should we look for a prophecy to be accepted as valid?

when we reject what?
Because prophecy is given through man, it's fallible. We aren't called to blindly accept any prophetic word. Instead Paul says to do what?
If you have the gift of prophecy or you've had a prophecy spoken over you it should align with Scripture and should come to fruition if it's truly a word from God.
Let's take a look at what Paul says about prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:1 (NLT)
Let be your highest goal! But you should alsothe special abilities the Spirit gives— the ability to
It is not an option; it is an instruction. When God gives us a straightforward command in the Bible, He expects us to obey. What is holding you back?

If you aren't in the habit of doing so already, let's begin asking the Lord for the gift of prophecy SO THAT we can strengthen, encourage and comfort others



(1 Corinthians 14:3). What fears, doubts or questions do you have regarding the gift of prophecy? Lay these out before the Lord and ask Him to fill you with truth and wisdom as you, "desire the special abilities the Spirit gives- especially the ability to prophesy."



The God of Peace, Full of Grace, is Faithful!



Prayer:

"Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for your steadfast love and faithfulness to me. Please bring me into a deeper knowledge of You in all of Your amazing attributes. May I worship You in a true sense of wonder that You are more than anything I can imagine. Amen."



Worship: / Am, Mark Schultz

Read the passage for the week - 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28 and write it in your journal.

Paul ended his first letter to the Thessalonians with an affirmation of God's character and strong prayer over the congregation, pleading for their holiness/sanctification with an assurance of God's ability to carry it out because of His faithfulness. In addition, he pray's God's grace over them. Just as it was integral to their faith that they understood God's character, it is the same for us to build our lives on the firm foundation of who God is so we will confidently believe that He is all that He says He is and will surely carry out His promises. A.W. Tozer, in The Knowledge of the Holy, discusses how every sin results from some misunderstanding of God's character.

Let's reaffirm what we know of God. In Exodus 34:6 God told Moses who He is when establishing His covenant with the Israelites on Mount Sinai. Please write it.

Underline merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and faithfulness.

List out all of the attributes you can think of for God and/or names of God which signify His character.

Next to each one, define, using Bible or dictionary (google works good!) **God of peace:** How does the dictionary define peace? Paul starts his prayer with an identification of God as "God of peace." We now have peace with God because God initiated the reconciliation of Christians with himself and is now at peace with them. (ESV Study Bible) The Bible Knowledge Commentary (TBKC) explains that in calling attention to the God of peace, Paul was reminding them that it is God that provides peace through the gospel which was why the Thessalonians were enjoying peace with each other and this peace would be their adequate resource for the future. This is the peace with God that we experience because of what Jesus did for us. Write out Romans 5:1 Before trusting in Christ Jesus for salvation, we did not know peace with God. In fact, Colossians 1:21 (ESV) states, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior." How is your life impacted by your having peace with God? How do you allow it to affect your relationship with others in your life?

The other kind of "peace" that the Bible discusses is that gift that is given to us by God when we give up all anxieties to Him, trusting His work in our lives.

Write out Philippians 4:6,7.

Underline the command in that scripture. Then circle the glorious promise. So, it is the difference between the peace of God and peace with God. How awesome that we have both! **God is faithful:** Use a dictionary to define faithful. When Paul prays for their holiness, he follows with a confident assurance of God's character of faithfulness - "He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:24) The same God who calls a Christian will perform this by the Holy Spirit who indwells him. God is faithful to bring to completion the work He has begun in Christians. (TBKC) Read Philippians 1:6 (ESV) and fill in the blanks: "And I am _____ of this, that He who _____ a good work in you will bring it to _____ at the day of Jesus Christ." Read Romans 3:3,4(b) and write out what this scripture says about God's faithfulness vs. human faithlessness. What difference does it make to you knowing that God is true and faithful ALL the time? **Grace:** Use your dictionary to define.

I like, "God's loving kindness that we do not deserve." It has been helpful to me to remember what I learned about "mercy" and "grace" being opposite sides of the same coin, with "mercy" described as "God choosing not to give us what we really deserve."

Paul frequently prays in his letters for God's grace, through Christ, to be with all his readers. The grace of God was Paul's great delight. He identified it as the grace that comes through our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him Christians have all. In other words, all that one has in Christ is due to His Grace.

Paul was always concerned with his readers experiencing and enjoying this grace. Read Ephesians 1:5-7 and summarize.
As God calls and justifies by grace, He sanctifies (makes holy) by grace too. God does not save a person by grace and then leave him alone to work out his Christian growth by works. Read Galatians 3:3 and summarize the point that Paul was making to the Galatians.
How important is it to understand correctly who God is and to have confidence in his ability/willingness to carry out His promises?
When going through tough times in life, are you able to rely on His strength?
What things can you do to increase your sense of "awe" and wonder for God?
The following books are amazing in enhancing this feeling for God: Francis Chan's <u>Crazy Love</u> , Paul Tripp's <u>Awe</u> , A.W. Tozer's <u>Knowledge of the Holy</u> , and/or <u>Pursuit of God</u> .
List one or more attributes of God and a relating scripture. Example - Creator/sovereign = Psalm 95:3-7 "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the depths of

Write out 2 Corinthians 12:9

For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."

the earth; the heights of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

Select at least one person this week and tell them who God is as described in the Bible; using the attributes of Jesus that we have discussed. Or if you prefer, write them a letter about who He is; creator of the world, savior, etc. etc.......



Write out a prayer to Jesus thanking him for all of His attributes that are on your heart.

Paul Prayed for their Sanctification



1 Thessalonians 5:23

"May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Prayer:

"Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for creating in me a clean heart. I pray that You will make me more and more like You in word and deed as You help me to desire You more than anything else in my life. Amen."



Worship: Keep Making Me, Sidewalk Prophets

Paul concludes with a pastoral prayer that the Thessalonians be marked by holiness at the second coming of Christ which is a call for God to sanctify them completely and to make them blameless.

Write a definition for sanctify.

Paul prayed that God would sanctify (set apart) them to Himself in every area of their lives - body, soul, and spirit. Let us read some verses that speak to this amazing work that God is performing in us who are called His children.

Read 2 Timothy 2:21 (ESV) and fill in:

"Those who	themselves from the latter(sin) will be instruments for special pur-		
poses, made	, useful to the Master and prepared to do any"		
Read Acts 26	:18 (ESV) and complete.		
"То	their eyes and turn them from darkness to, and from the power or		
Satan to	, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those		
who are	by in Me."		

Read Colossians 3:1,5.	
Where do we set our hearts?	
Why?	
What do we put to death?	
Read Hebrews 9:14 (ESV) and complete.	
"How much more, then, will the of	, who through the eternal Spirit of
fered Himself unblemished to God,	our consciences from that lead to
, so that we may serve the living Go	d!"
Read Hebrews 10:10 - 14 and summarize what the "And by that will,	scripture says happened according to God's wil

Paul's desire for their sanctification is strongly emphasized throughout their total being - *Spirit, soul, body.* The ESV SB, reports that the Spirit, soul, body represents the entirety of human nature, perhaps the spiritual, mental, and physical components of man, respectively. According to Henry Morris SB, this verse proves that man is a tri-unity of soul, body, and spirit, patterned in a sense after the divine Godhead, in whose image he was both created and made (Genesis 1:26 - 27). The spirit and soul often seem to be the same in many contexts, but they are not the same, evident by the fact that the Word of God can divide them asunder (Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intention of the heart.")

One could think of the soul, body, and spirit as representing the mental, physical, and spiritual components of man, respectively. Another way of looking at this triunity is the Spirit as the highest and most unique part of man that enables him to communicate with God. The soul is the part of man that makes him conscious of himself; it is the seat of his personality. The body, of course, is the physical part through which the inner person expresses himself and by which he is immediately recognized.

The Bible recognizes the difference throughout: Write out Matthew 10:28
Read Mark 12:30 and report how, exactly, Jesus says we should love Him?
Paul also prayed that the Thessalonians would be preserved blameless. Define blameless .
One definition for blameless is having no legitimate ground for accusation. The Message describes this state as "scrubbed clean of the grime of sin."
Psalm 19:13 identifies "blameless" as "innocent of great transgression." Check out what King David says in Psalm 15:1-3. Write it.
So, if the Thessalonians are blameless, then they will not be ashamed at the appearing of Jesus. And there should be no concern whether they will be sufficiently blameless because God is faithful, and He will surely make it happen (1 Thessalonians 5:24).
Paul desired that the Thessalonians would be kept blameless by God in their relationship with Him in their inner personal lives, and in their social contacts with other people.
In consideration of Paul's desire for the Thessalonians' inner lives and their relationship with others, take a hard look at your own life in these areas. We are told to live a life that is beyond or above reproach; one in which no one may criticize. Read Romans 12:9-21 which is often titled "Mark of the True Christian." Use this as a prompt to list your current functioning in both your inner and outer life. What things might you give up or stop doing?
What activities might you add or increase in your life?



Express to God your thankfulness for His rescuing you from the life you lived before Him. Discuss with Him how your life has changed and pray for where He is taking You.



Prayer:

"Dear Lord Jesus, teach me to pray powerfully, passionately, and intentionally with prayers that shake heaven and earth. Amen."



Worship: When We Pray, Tauren Wells

Paul placed a high priority on prayer both praying powerfully for God's people in all of his letters and asking for others to pray for him. Doubtless much of the success of his missionary work could be attributed to the prayers of the Thessalonians and other believers. 1 Thessalonians 5:25 relates Paul's strong appeal for prayer to those he regarded as brothers. Paul understood both his personal insufficiency and God's sufficiency.

Note 2 Corinthians 3:5

"Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God."

Read Colossians 4:2-4 How did Paul say we should pray?

Paul asked for prayer. What exactly did he ask the Colossians to pray for?

How comfortable are you to ask others to pray for you? It requires honesty and humility. If you struggle with asking people to pray for you, talk to God about it and ask Him to uncover your resistance.

Aspects of powerful prayer:

Jesus provides for us a great model for prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. He first instructs his disciples, "do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words." (Matthew 6:7) He also instructs them to avoid the motivation of praying in order to be seen as holy.

He goes on to instruct, what has been called "The Lord's Prayer," in verses 9-13. **Please read it and note all of the aspects that Jesus identifies as important.**

We begin with acknowledgment of God's identity as creator, sovereign over all, including His holiness. We then declare our desire for His kingdom to come and His will to be done. We proceed to make our requests of Him such as meeting our daily needs and for forgiveness. There is also acknowledgment of our forgiveness of others. We are told to ask Him to protect us from temptation and evil. That reminds me of what Jesus asked his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. When Jesus left them in the Garden while He prayed, He instructed, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak."

Perhaps the best model of prayer, is provided for us in John 17. Read the entire chapter of this beautiful pleading prayer by Jesus to His Father on our behalf. He prayed for His disciples, but also for all of us Christians to come.

What stands out to you?

What may you borrow of this prayer in your own intercession prayers for your loved ones?

What are some aspects of prayer that you have learned that stick out to you?

What do you learn about prayer from Hebrews 4:16?

What about the second half of Philippians 4:6?

Journal Prompt

Identify one person, or a few, whom you can form an accountability group in which you share your needs for prayer and pray for each other. Try to arrange a regular meeting time or even a regular check in via phone call or email.

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Write out a powerful prayer with the many aspects that we have discussed.



Final Exhortations: Greetings and Command to Read this Letter to the Brothers.

Prayer:

"Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for teaching me how to love, and for Your Word which is completely sufficient in instructing me on everything I need to know on how to be a woman of integrity. Help me to abide in You that Your word would guide me into all truth. Teach me to love Your people better, always expressing Your truth to them in love. Amen."



Worship: Your Words, Green Day

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:26,27. Today we will delve deeply into two concepts that were addressed at the end of this 1st letter to the Thessalonians; greetings and command to read this letter aloud.

Greetings: In verse 26, Paul instructs, "Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss." This type of greeting was customary in the 1st century and was a symbol of Christian fellowship and holiness. 1 Corinthians 16:20 reports, "All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss." So, Paul was encouraging an outward physical expression of true Christian love in a form that was culturally acceptable in his day. In studying how Paul and other believers of the day greeted each other, I wish to take the word "greet" much deeper, and meditate on how we show value for our brother and sisters. In other words, can we learn and practice how to approach our family members, friends, co-workers and acquaintances as individuals made in the image of God with a unique purpose that only they can fulfill. A kiss in Paul's day expressed intimacy, how do we display intimacy in our communication with people?

I am thinking about how we not only display eye contact but maintain it, asking probing questions that show genuine interest. Isn't that so different from most people today? Listening without interrupting as if showing that what they have to say is of more value than what we have to say. What about letting the other person be the first one to exit the conversation? We are all so busy today, and it is all too common to hurry our interactions, interrupting and cutting short our conversations. However, are we just a victim of "busyness" or is it selfishness, that we have filled our lives so stuffed with activities that we do not make time for what is most important to God, showing value and love for His people. In addition, our smartphones are distracting us from real life prolonged interaction. So, I would encourage us all, to look at how we can improve on our "greetings" or interactions with others.

Define the word "greet".

sis of how you feel you accomplish this with the following people in your life if it applies.
Husband or boyfriend :
Children:
Mother/father/siblings:
Friends:
Co-workers:
Neighbors:
Do you make them feel valued, listened to and understood?
Who is the first to walk away or terminate the interaction?
What would your family or friends say about how you make them feel?
I know this is very convicting, but so worth the effort to look deeply into our hearts as this really touches on the issue of making Jesus known - this is His character! He was never too busy for people! Read 1 John 4:12 (ESV) and fill in:
"No one has ever God; if we one another, God
in us and his love is in us."
We all can improve in this area. What are your ideas or changes you can make?
Think about how our love as Christians distinguishes us from many non-believers in our culture. Review Christ-like, agape love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. How do we display this kind of love to each other?

The words "recognition," "welcome," and "acknowledgement" stand out to me. Write a brief synop-

The letter of 1 John displays the importance of how we love each other.

1 John 2:10-11

"Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

Who is the light? _____ So, what does it mean to abide in the light?

What might that stumbling look like?

Explain the analogy of "hating his brother" - (think not showing love) and walking in darkness with blinded eyes?

Read 1 John 3:14 and summarize.

Read this letter aloud: The final exhortation strongly urges that this letter be read to all the brothers. "I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers."

1 Thessalonians 5:27. Paul's intention was probably for the letter to be read to the whole Thessalonian church and most likely out loud. His words were strong as he put his readers under oath to do so, suggesting that God would discipline them if they disobeyed. Think about how we must swear under oath in a court of law. Breaking that oath is called perjury and is punishable under the law. According to my commentary TBKC, Paul's motive may have been one of the following or both; there may have been some problems in the church that Paul wanted to get at by having everyone hear his words, or because this letter was written under divine inspiration it was therefore spiritually valuable. Colossians 4:16 pleads for the letter to the Colossians to be read aloud to all community members. The public reading in the churches points to the authority of Paul's letters and also assumes that they were written to be understood by ordinary believers.

I would like to take two important truths from Paul's exhortation and explore more deeply; the significance of honoring our word, ie...our integrity, and immersing ourselves in truth including the unity of public declaration of that truth.

Under oath before the Lord: Let's look a	nt scriptures that add	dress our integrity.		
Please read James 3:14-17. List all of the "earthly, unspiritual, and demonic."	qualities that desci	ribe that wisdom w	vhich is labeled,	
"Where jealousy and selfish ambition ex	<i>ist,"</i> there will be w	/hat?		
Describe the wisdom from above?				
What is a person's motive in being false information?	e to the truth, includ	ding exaggerating	and leaving out	
Truth does not always bring about peace, especially to those who do not walk in the light and do not want to hear truth. However, to those who hear it privately or the public declaration of truth and accept it, attempting to abide by it are sowing what, according to James 3:18?				
Write out James 3:18				
Read Matthew 5:33-37 on Jesus' words re-	garding honoring oa	aths. Fill in from vs.	33 (ESV)	
"You shall not	, but shall pe	rform to the Lord	what You have	
From vs. 37 "Let what you	be simply '	' or '	, anything	
more than this comes from	''			
So, we always tell the truth and honor our commitments as James 4:17 states, "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." And being truthful and maintaining integrity is always the right thing to do, yes?				
Immersing ourselves in the truth:				
What does John 14:6 say that the truth is?	Please write the ve	erse.		

By reading His word. List all of what you gain from reading the Bible:
How about instruction, encouragement, guidance, etc
Imagine your life without God's word? What would it look like?
Describe how your life looked during a period where you were regularly reading God's word, meditating and praying through it? Perhaps memorizing it?
If you haven't experienced this discipline, imagine and describe what your life would look like?
Consider counterfeit replacements or shortcuts that people turn to for "truth". I'm thinking of Facebook, various apps, non-Biblical books or devotionals used in lieu of the Bible. Any others?
There is no substitute for God's truth. There could never be a better, more valuable way of spending your time than in God's word which will impact your life richly, as well as every other person you touch. To fail to reach out for God's precious wisdom is to deny that we are all spiritually sick and in need of our daily antibiotic that will cure our skewed minds and hearts. Otherwise, we so easily deceive ourselves that we can "do religion" in our own way. We lose the confronting, healing words of the Bible. We <i>need</i> God's Word and to allow it to be the guiding force for who we are and how we behave.
Finally, what do you think was the value of reading Paul's letter aloud?
Perhaps, conviction of sin in the church, or the importance of gaining unity and acceptance of truth. I think of the Apostles' Creed as an example of this. This 4th century creed contains a summary of the apostles' teachings which expresses a statement of Christian belief which is still recited today as

a commonality of our Christian faith.

Journal Prompt

Write a letter with the intention of sharing the Gospel. As you write, pray for wisdom in who God wants you to share it with and how He wants you to share it. Include your own testimony; what your life looked like before trusting in Jesus, how you came to know Him, and what your life looks like now.

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** Remember to pray before writing this letter. Please carve out time to do this exercise as it may be life changing for you and the person you share it with. And I would LOVE to hear how it goes!

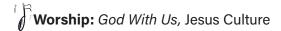
Discuss with God what His Word means to you and make a plan with him on how you will increase your time with Him.

Review 1 Thessalonians



Prayer:

"Dear Lord Jesus, thank You For this amazing letter and for Paul's sensitive heart and honest expression of emotion toward those whom he disciples. May I learn from His example of openly expressing encouragement and love to Your people. Amen."



God's steadfastness and grace: 1 Thessalonians 5:28 "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." It is beautiful to reflect that We have a God that wants to bless, favor, and show grace to us. We are naturally conditioned to experience relationships characterized as fickle on earth. We have no reference for such divine attention and consistency in blessing. In other words, the capriciousness of our human relationships are marked by favor one day and unfavored the next! How different is our permanent condition for those who are called according to His purposes.

Can you relate to instability in your relationships?

What does it mean to you to contemplate the Lord's steadfastness in His love for you?

Steadfast is a characteristic of God that we see throughout the Bible.

Read Psalm 25:10(ESV) and fill in.

"All the _____ of the Lord are ____ and ____, for those who keep His covenant and His testimonies."

Define steadfastness.

I have noted the words *sure*, *dependable*, *reliable*, *constant*, *unwavering*. These words just do not characterize most human beings. I especially like a definition from pathos.com, "We could define steadfastness as having a firm loyalty or constant and unswerving dedication to something or someone." Of the 219 times that the word steadfast appears it is followed by the word love in nearly 200 of those times in the Bible. That is one thing we know with 100% certainty about God; His love is steadfast, just as His faithfulness is. All the paths of the Lord are sure and dependable and His paths are as steadfast as God Himself is. (Patheos, Christian Crier)

How different our lives would be if we lived out the understanding that the Lord's favor rests on His people and not begrudgingly so. He freely extends His grace, giving Himself away to people. A translation of the Greek word grace (charis) reads: He is "always leaning toward them." God reaches out to people because He is inclined to bless them. This unconditional treatment differs greatly from how we treat each other which is mostly conditional; if you please me, then I will show favor to you. The most incredible fact of the Christian life is the assurance that the grace we first received as a believer is forever directed towards us during our faltering faith path. This gracious positional permanence can free us to fully put our trust in a completely safe Heavenly Father, one in which we can be fully known and unafraid. That is the deep dream of all of us that goes unfulfilled until we connect to the perfect Father who loved us first even when He knew how fallen and messed up we were. I'm reminded of the hymn I grew up singing, "Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin...taking away my burdens, setting my spirit free. For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me!"

Discuss with God how you experience that grace and how thankful you are for it. Ask Him to help you accept it into your heart and be changed by it.

Many people are burdened by a false narrative that they have to perform for approval and achieve to have significance or value. God's grace frees us to be human beings significant not because of anything we have done or could do, but because of what He has done. He gives us significance and value at the cross and we don't achieve it; we receive it. All world religions are based on performance in order to receive salvation. Our faith is the opposite, as Jesus does the work, and we are freely given the gifted results. This enables us to come to God honestly because we are so thoroughly known and loved! That's wonderful grace that compels us to freely confess and press in to the Father who is gracious and for us!!

Do you have any preconceived notions about the need to perform or incorrect views of God; judgment and wrath that are inconsistent to His grace, perhaps from your childhood, in which you need to toss?

Let's review the 5 chapters of 1 Thessalonians.

Chapter 1: By the grace of God, the Thessalonians, loved by God, received the Word, and their work of faith and labor of love, steadfastness of hope in Jesus became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

Going back to your 1st week of homework, discuss at least one meaningful insight you gained from chapter one.

Chapter 2: Paul and his co-workers boldly and earnestly proclaim the gospel to the Thessalonians after much suffering and persecution. They remind them of their diligence in sharing themselves and the gospel with them as they encourage them in their pursuit of holiness. Paul praises their eagerness to accept the gospel among much persecution as he acknowledges their commonality of suffering at the hands of godless men. He expresses his longing to see the Thessalonians, his joy and glory.

Review your homework from chapter two and list some new insights you gleaned. What stands out to you?

Chapter 3: Timothy was sent to the Thessalonians to "establish and exhort" them in their faith knowing the deceptions and temptations from evil men that they would confront. Paul expresses joy and thanksgiving at their faith and love, spurring them on in love for one another with hearts that are blameless in holiness before God. He continues to profusely express longing to visit them and bolster their faith.

Write some of the highlights in your homework regarding this chapter.

Chapter 4: The first 12 verses deal with Paul's encouragement in the sanctification process of becoming more holy, pleasing God in purity, honor, self-control, brotherly love, diligence, and hard working lives that are beyond reproach. The last part of the chapter concerns The Day of The Lord, filling in the missing gaps for the Thessalonians and encouraging them to spread the good news that both the dead and alive in Christ will be resurrected to God forever.

Express your thoughts on this chapter, identifying at least one highlight.

Chapter 5: This chapter deals with details of the Day of The Lord and the suddenness of the event that necessitates our being sober and alert. Paul encourages the Thessalonians as "children of the light" to protect themselves with the "breastplate of faith and love" and the "helmet of the hope of salvation." Since "God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ," we can encourage each other with this information. In addition, final instructions are given to respect our leaders and be at peace among each other; to be hard workers, patient, do good to each other, and rejoice with thanksgiving. There is a final farewell and prayer for sanctification with a reminder of God's faithfulness.

Relate what stands out to you about this chapter.



We've reached the end, Ladies!

Discuss with God the impact this book has made on you.

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Handwrite 1 Thessalonians



