



THESSALONIANS

Life Group Study Guide | Holy Cross Church

WEEK OF SEPT 15 - 20

OVERVIEW

Last week we begin our study through the books of First and Second Thessalonians, written by the Apostle Paul to the church in the city of Thessalonica around A.D. 50. Paul proclaims the gospel in Thessalonica and a church is born. Possibly only after a month in the city, Paul experiences extreme persecution and is forced to flee for his life. Narrowly escaping by night, Paul, Timothy, and Silas journeyed west. Paul is devastated because he loves these new Christians and he feels his ministry there was cut short and he is dying to know how they are doing. So, he sends Timothy, his young apprentice to the Christians to encourage them and see how they are doing in their faith and new life with Jesus. Timothy returns to Paul with his report. *These two letters (1 and 2 Thessalonians) are a response to that report.*

Family love dominates in this letter from Paul. Over and over again, Paul refers to the recipients as *brothers and sisters*. They are loved by God who is called their *Father*. In these two short letters, there are at least 38 references to our identity as God's family. This discussion will dig deeper into Paul's usage of the family metaphor and our application of it today.

OPENING DISCUSSION

How can people really get to know you? Not just your likes and dislikes, but the things that really drive you. That seems like a weird question, but think about it for a minute. If someone really wanted to get to know your passions, desires, fears, and loves—how would you want them to do that?

READ

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

STUDY & APPLY

1. In our passage, more perhaps than anywhere else in his letters, Paul discloses his mind, expresses his emotions, and bares his soul. How do you specifically see Paul's pastoral heart on display?
2. What metaphors does Paul use in this passage to describe his conduct among the Thessalonians? What is the significance of each?
3. Verse 8 is a beautiful statement on the importance of loving those within God's family—and what biblical love looks like. The expression of biblical love is the combination of gospel truth and the selfless giving of oneself. How is one without the other a distortion of love?

4. Paul and his ministry partners were eager to stay, form friendships, and invest in the lives of their brothers and sisters in Christ in deeply personal and sacrificial ways. What are the benefits of having relationships like this in the church? What are the dangers?

5. The central thing that Paul wants the Thessalonians to do (v.12) is to *“walk in a manner worthy of God”*. What does it mean to do this and how does this language fit the reality of God’s one-way grace, which assures us that we do not earn right standing with him by living the good life?

6. The Christian community is not simply an association or club to which we belong; but a brotherhood and sisterhood where family love dominates among those who together call God their Father. How could this be lived out more at Holy Cross or in your Life Group? How can you be faithful, yourself, to follow the example of Paul?

PRAY

Spend a few minutes praying for the fulfillment of the picture from question 5 above. Pray for gentleness, truth in love, and for the gospel to be put on display more and more in our church.