

THESSALONIANS

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Life Group Study Guide | Holy Cross Church

WEEK OF OCT 7 - 11

OVERVIEW

Paul's words reveal his true affections for the Thessalonian Christians. He further opens his heart to them and expresses concern for them in a much more focused and specific way now. His forced separation from the Thessalonians seemed to intensify his pastoral concerns. Yet Paul's longing to reunite with them is not merely a striking example of Christian affection; it is an echo of the relational God who created us in his image. We have been custom-designed to for unhindered union with God and our neighbor. However, sin has fractured our relationships in every direction. This whole section of study describes the way we are called to love one another in the life of the church and to demonstrate the love of Christ to a lost and dying world.

READ

Read through the text for this study, 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

STUDY & APPLY

1. Paul's well-being is deeply bound up with the Thessalonians' well-being: their flourishing brings him comfort, gratitude, joy, even life. What are some ways we as a church community can cultivate a heart that is more easily edified and encouraged by reports of God's grace among us?
2. God has designed his church to demonstrate their love for Jesus through the mutual sharing and giving to one another. How does Paul demonstrate his commitment to sacrificing for the Thessalonian church? Discuss how difficult this must have been for Paul.
3. We do not often think to sacrifice like Paul because it is our tendency to hold onto the people and things that bring us great comfort and joy. The opposite of the commitment to sacrificing for the people of God is the sin of possessiveness. Possessiveness is caused by being obsessed with our own joy. Think on the quote from the sermon "*Arranging situations in our life for the sole purpose of maximizing our own joy is the opposite of gospel thinking*". In the face of the many difficulties today, how does a commitment to sacrificing for others show the heart of the gospel?
4. One of Paul's main concerns was that their suffering would push them off track from the gospel, like a ship blown away from its proper course. How can suffering sweep believers off track or lure them away from the gospel? How does Paul demonstrate the importance of discipleship and ongoing spiritual encouragement in the face of struggle?

5. What are the elements of Paul's beautiful prayer for the Thessalonians in verses 11-13? In the prayer, what affect does our future glory in light of the gospel have on our present calling?

6. The Thessalonian church was a new community of faith and love where people from different social, cultural and racial backgrounds treated each other with the love appropriate in a healthy family. This was a sign, which Paul regularly celebrated, of God's dramatic work. What expressions of faith and love within your own life or the life of our church community would promote the same kind of joy and thankfulness that Paul felt?

PRAY

Spend a few moments giving thanks for the faith and love you see in your Christian community. Move into praying for those in your life who are experiencing difficulty. Pray the three aspects of Paul's prayer found in verses 11-13; that you might be able to be present with them, that their love would increase and that they would be strengthened.