

Do This and More

“Live on Mission”

Week 4 – August 27, 2023

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 and 5:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Have you ever taken advantage of someone's generosity? Maybe it wasn't devious or intentional. Share your experience.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

When we are called to live “THIS” life, it is one that is not compartmentalized to Sundays but that transforms where we have been placed. During the time Paul worked alongside of the Thessalonians, his work was a testament of his witness. The witness of Paul's love won the respect of outsiders and drew them into the story of God. Sometimes we miss the quiet and significant ways that our lives can be actively a missional purpose. Our work ethic matters. Where we are placed matters. How we live on mission is an opportunity to not only please God but invite others to experience Him.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Jesus gave his life to fulfill the spiritual and physical needs of others, and this was to be the pattern that continued within the context of the church. Paul continually encouraged the early church to practically care for one another's needs. It is within this context that Paul wrote **1 Thessalonians 4:11-12** and **1 Thessalonians 5:12-14**.
 - a. The church is to be a community where everyone who's able works and contributes, yet it's very easy for people to become enabled and take advantage of the generosity of others. What can happen when we focus on generosity and love, but leave out work? Read **2 Thessalonians 3:6-13** and respond.
 - b. How does the ethic of love and the ethic of work lead to more contribution and less consumption?
2. How does contributing to a church community nurture and fuel and encourage your walk with Christ?
3. Paul encourages the people to mind their own business and work with their hands so that their daily life would win the respect of others and they would not be dependent on others.
 - a. **Colossians 3:23** says we are to work for the Lord, not man. What changes with this distinction? How does this allow us to live a life of love?
 - b. **John 13:34** says we are to love one another. Share what this verse says to you personally.
 - c. Are you working to please the Lord? In what ways can you serve Him and the community?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that we serve, because he served us, and we love, because he loved us. We desire our lives to be a response to what God has done for us. We desire our work to not only consume the benefits of community but contribute to the community. Ask Him to help us live a life of generosity, service, and love.

Do This and More

“Love One Another”

Week 3 – August 20, 2023

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 & 4:9-10

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: How have you seen someone show love in their community recently?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

“Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.”

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

Paul concludes his letter with a final challenge about the impact of loving one another. Paul gives vision for what it looks like to love people well in 1 Thessalonians 5:14 and points out specific people to look for. As we see in the story of the Thessalonians, their love for one another had impact not only on their communities but the surrounding communities. It was noticed how the story of their love for one another, founded on the sacrificial love of Jesus, increases the family of God. As the family of God, we are given a great opportunity. The love we have for one another can please God. When the Father sees His love actively displayed within and among His children, it brings the Him great joy.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. **1 Thessalonians 4:9-10** says, *“Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more...”*
 - a. Love isn't something people should hear us talk about, but rather live out. What are some simple ways love can be evidenced in our lives?
 - b. Love isn't always centric to our relationships, including our relationships within the church. What are some of the things that distract and divide us? (i.e., politics, positions, etc)
 - c. Read **Revelation 2:4-5** and discuss Jesus' response to the early church.
2. Sadly, in our culture, the church is known more for what it's against than what it's for. Discuss why.
3. There are two ways that God taught us to love one another, and Paul shared this over and over. God demonstrates love by His own example and He counsels us to love others through the Holy Spirit. Read **Romans 5:8** and **Romans 8:5** and discuss how we are invited to make loving one another a priority.
 - a. What is the urgency to love one another?
 - b. Who benefits when we love one another?
 - c. Where are the opportunities in your own life to love one another?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God for His example of great love. Ask Him, through the Holy Spirit, to continually guide us to love one another increasingly. The world is desperate to see practical demonstrations of God's love; ask Him to make us a part of that so the world knows Him.

Do This and More

“Keep in Step with the Spirit”

Week 2 – August 13, 2023

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Have you ever had the desire to change something but found it really difficult? Share what you wanted to change.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

“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. ⁶ 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.⁷ And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.” **1 Thessalonians 1:5-7**

Paul's proclamation of the gospel was not just words but accompanied by the Holy Spirit's power. The people of Thessalonica experienced receiving the gospel (“the word”) and it produced joy despite the suffering they also experienced. The people heard the words of the gospel and miracles occurred revealing the works of the Spirit. This produced the evidence they needed to believe the gospel as truth and resulted in the people of Thessalonica being a model for believers throughout Greece.

The Power of the Spirit is available to us too – to move in our conversations, our difficult moments, and the places in our lives where we fear suffering. We too can experience joy in the midst of suffering.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Imitation of God, scripture, and others, and intimacy by growing through connecting to the Spirit is displayed in **1 Corinthians 4:16**, **1 Corinthians 11:1**, **Ephesians 5:1**, and **John 16:7-15**. Read and discuss how imitation and intimacy can lead to transformation, specifically the transition from *head* knowledge (instruction, guidance, understanding) to *heart* knowledge (heart/soul connection when the Good News of Jesus penetrates your heart).
2. It has been said that God in the Old Testament can be described as God “with us” and God in the New Testament can be described as God “within us”. The Spirit dwells within us to guide and help us, to advocate for us, to be our comfort, and give us an advantage. How can remaining in the moment or being stuck in the past, limit us from experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit?
3. As we keep in step with the Spirit, we can live lives pleasing to God; a pleasing life is a transforming life. Read **Galatians 5:16-26**. How will we know if we are living by the power of the Holy Spirit? How will we know if our heart engagement will produce life change?
4. Have you ever known someone who lived a joy-filled life during suffering? What was it about this person that allowed them to experience joy? How did their trials bring them closer to God?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that we can have a story of transformation, just like the people of Thessalonica. Ask Him to help us engage in the Word, posture ourselves to be moved in power, and to keep in step with the Holy Spirit. Thank God that we too can experience joy in the midst of suffering, produce fruit in our lives, and our lives can be contagious enough to change the world around us.

Do This and More

“This”

Week 1 – August 6, 2023

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2; Colossians 1:9-10; Ephesians 5:8-10

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Read the Scripture, reflect on the questions below, and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Think about our different tastes. What is a food or flavor you like that others might find unpleasant?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

“...we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.” 1 Thessalonians 4:1

THIS was Paul's encouragement to the church in Thessalonica (Thessalonians 4). Paul affirmed the church for how they were already pleasing God, but he encouraged the church to continually please Him more and more. He didn't tell them to live in order to please themselves, nor did he tell them to live in order to please others. Rather, he told the early church that they could actually bring God pleasure with the way they lived their lives and explained three ways they could do this: their sanctification, their love for one another, and the opportunity they had to win the respect of outsiders.

God truly cares about the details of our lives. He cares about things like our sexuality, purity, and holiness. He cares about the ways we love one another. He cares about our work ethic and how we can use it to earn respect from others. And Paul invites us to please God with the way we approach all these things.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Although nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, and although His love for us is completely unconditional, that doesn't mean our lives automatically please Him. THIS is why Paul encouraged the early church to “...live in order to please God.” What does it look like to please God? Have you ever thought about your life through this lens?
2. Certain things are pleasing and displeasing to God, but to the original audience of Thessalonica you could not *please* God, but rather *appease* Him. To them, the gods were angry. They caused storms, destruction, damage, drought, floods, etc, so you would make sacrifices and do things in an attempt to appease them and suspend their wrath. Paul's teaching was completely counter cultural. Do you know anyone who has this view of God today? What are some of the same tensions we face that are similar to the people of Thessalonica?
3. This question can help us re-calibrate the way we approach our life: *Who do I live to please?* Consider how you would answer this question. Do you fall into the pattern of trying to please yourself (self-seeking), others (people-pleasing), or something or someone with power or status (government, boss, etc)? How?
4. Read **Colossians 1:9-10** and **Ephesians 5:8-10**, Paul's letters to new believers in Colossia and Ephesus. Discuss what pleases God and the life-journey that Paul is inviting us to go on with the Holy Spirit.

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that He cares about all of the details of our lives and through Paul, He gives us a picture of what this amazing life-journey of pleasing Him can look like. Lord, we desire to please you!