

1 Thessalonians 1 Study notes



Opening Prayer:

Our loving God, we meet here for this time around your written Word. Thank you for this space and opportunity. Guide our discussion and increase our understanding, we pray. May we be open to hearing what you may have for us to learn about ourselves and you so that we may grow in faith and be more open to your Spirit leading us forward as disciples of Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Just a minute:

Each person is to take 1 minute to introduce themselves and 1 thing this 5 week study brings to their mind before they start. (Hope, fear, anxiety, peace??? etc)

Purpose for the Letters (have this read by someone)

Timothy's report of conditions in the Thessalonian church led Paul to write the first letter shortly after he arrived in Corinth about A.D. 51. Some of the Thessalonians apparently believed that Jesus Christ was about to return momentarily and had consequently given up their jobs

and had become disorderly. Some worried about what had happened to their loved ones who had died before the Lord had returned. Persecution from the Gentiles as well as the Jews still oppressed the believers who were nevertheless holding fast to the truth and eager to see Paul again. Some outside the church, however, remained hostile to Paul. It also appears that some within the church had returned to their former habits involving sexual impurity.

It seems that Paul had at least three purposes in mind when he wrote 1 Thessalonians. First, he wanted to encourage the Christians in Thessalonica who were making good progress in their new faith. Second, he desired to correct misinformation about himself and his fellow missionaries that some of his critics in Thessalonica were circulating. Third, he wrote to give additional instruction that would contribute to the Thessalonians' spiritual growth.

Read (have this read by someone)

1 Thessalonians 1

Take 10

Discuss the sermon and the reading. What was new or a challenge? Discuss the differences in the 3 Christian workhorses of: Work of Faith, Labour of Love and Endurance of Hope.

Take 2 mins

In quiet reflection, think about people who encouraged you in your Christian walk.

Now Share

How you feel reflecting on these people and how has their encouragement shaped you and how do you encourage others?

Engaged to serve

V4-5 Talks about how the Holy Spirit engages with Paul but also with us today in bringing the Gospel to others. Share where you have felt stirred to speak / respond or maybe where in hindsight God has used you in bringing the gospel to others.

Society and Culture

The church in Thessalonica did not always have an easy ministry as idolatry and pagan worship was the societal norm. Today our society faces similar challenges and the church again is confronted.

What are some of the idols of our society today?

What are some of the idols in our church culture today?

Consumer Church

Churches can be seen as 'Consumer Churches' where it's almost like a transactional faith.

Extension: Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Ecc. 3 talks about the extremes of seasons that come to our lives. The consumer church is most celebrated when the seasons are good and positive as it is seen as a sign of God's favour being upon them. It is however most broken apart by harsh seasons it encounters or its congregation members encounter as it can be seen that people have been unfaithful, not prayed enough, not given enough and more.... leaders can also use harsh seasons to almost abuse congregational members by stating they have brought themselves to this place. As our society becomes more vocal in what it dislikes about the church culture it impacts our ability to be positive. These harsh seasons unfortunately seem to bring about a huge exit of ordained and lay people from leadership who cannot cope with the criticism or feel unworthy in their call.

Discuss the problems faced by churches that are seen like a commodity we buy into. How does this affect how we engage in ministry and mission with each other and into our broader community?

Why would a consumer church be attractive to people?

How would a non-consumer church be attractive to people? What traits are its strength?

Encouragement

The Thessalonians shone as a light in many ways for Paul in his ministry. How do you think the Thessalonians felt getting this letter? How do you think other churches then would have responded when they read this letter? If your church received this letter today and you had to tell the congregation, how would you deliver the message?

For the week ahead

Challenge: Write a letter or email to someone who has encouraged you or could do with encouragement and send it to them.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2

Prayer

Gracious God,

Thank you for this time spent together. May what we have read and shared enrich us in the coming week so that we are better able to be your hands, feet and voice in our community and in your world. May we be a blessing to our Christian community and our neighbours. May your kingdom come. In the name of our Lord and Saviour, we pray. Amen.