

## I Thessalonians I: Thanksgiving for good news

### Getting Started:

How would you gauge the spiritual health of a Church? What are some key things that you would look for?

### Setting the Scene:

Read Acts 16 -17:15 referring to the map. Plot the route and give a reason for each time that they move between a city.



Read I Thess 3:1-5 quickly list the reasons given for sending Timothy back to the Thessalonians. Describe some of the emotions that Paul might have felt regarding the Thessalonians.

### I:1-5a

What leads Paul to the conclusion that they are "loved" and "chosen" by God.

To what extent do you agree with this statement:

"The evidence that a Christian has genuinely received the word of the Gospel are faith, hope and love, without these one cannot truly be a Christian"

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How do you feel about there being observable signs of 'chosen-ness'?

Have you ever seen the word of the gospel work like it does in these verses?

### **1:5b-7**

Thinking about

- 1) what you have read in Acts about Paul Silas and Timothy, and
- 2) what you know about Jesus from the gospels

in what way did the Thessalonians become imitators of these people?

How is their joy unusual?

Why do you think that this particular aspect of their Christian living has become known throughout the region?

We are not likely to find ourselves in a position to express joy in spite of suffering, but there may be other ways that we have become imitators:

- a) If Paul were to look at St. John's what might he conclude that we are doing to imitate the lord and his servants?

### **1:8-10**

Discuss: "engagement in proclaiming the Gospel is key to the Christian life"

In what ways does the content of their Gospel give the Thessalonians reason to proclaim it?

### **Transforming Change**

When does transforming change normally happen in people's lives?

When did it happen in the Thessalonians life?

3 Ways in which you see the word of the Gospel shaping (insert a Christian friend here)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.
- 3.

Pray for this person, for our church and for other Christians, keeping in mind the values that Paul, Silas and Timothy hold dear in this chapter.

## I Thessalonians 2 : Genuine Faith

### **The Genuine Article**

“You know brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition” I Thess 2:1-2

Why do we regard the people on the next page as the genuine article?  
Would you say Paul was the genuine article? Why?

### **Genuine Appeal**

2:3-6a      What is ‘the appeal’?

What makes the Christian appeal genuine?

What corrupts Christian appeal in the passage?

When have you SEEN corrupt Christian appeals?

How do YOU corrupt your appeal to others?

### **Even More Credibility**

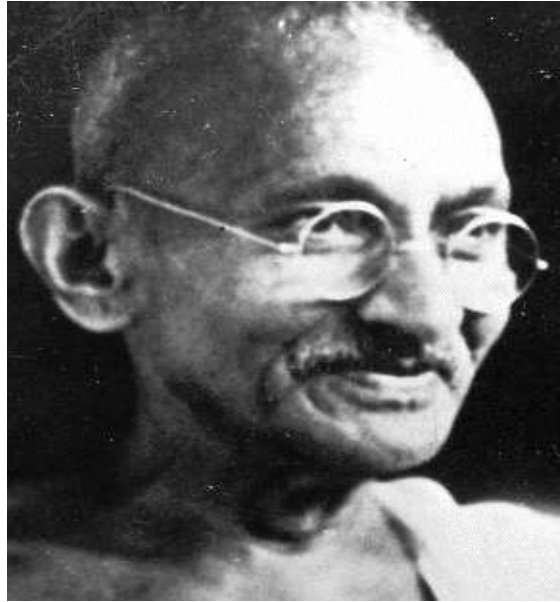
2:6b-12      Of all the other things Paul lists here as part of the credibility of his appeal – what impresses you most and why?

### **A Genuine & Credible Response**

2:13-16      What are the common features between their response and Paul’s appeal?

How is this a challenge to you?

Strange ending.....



**What do you Do with the Bitsy Bits of the Big Book?**

Read 2:17-3:13 – Like reading someone’s travel diary.

Is it relevant only to them?

What about ‘all Scripture God-breathed and useful?’ (2 Tim 3:16)

**2:18 & 3:5 Spiritual Conflict**

Describe the spiritual conflict you see

Around them:

Around us:

Are you convinced of this kind of supernatural conflict?

How would you know it was going on?

**2:19 & 3:8 What we Mean to Each Other**

We live life together as Christians, so what happens to you ought affect me. Let’s see

About them: read the verses and discuss.

About us:

2:19 - What do you imagine Jesus talking to you about when you see Him face to face?

Can you imagine him asking you about others? What difference would this make?

3:8 - When do we feel most alive? When do we ‘really live’....?

**3:10 A Less than Completed Faith?**

Lacking?.....In what way? Isn’t faith a gift from God – (Eph 2:8)? What could be lacking in it?

**3:11-13 A Final Prayer**

How does this prayer wrap up some of the issues above?

Spiritual Conflict:

What we Mean to Each Other:

A Less than Completed Faith:

Why not pray for each other – to be ‘delivered from evil’, for real love for each other, and for each others growth in the Lord?

## I Thessalonians 4:1-12

### **Ambitious?**

What are you ambitious about – and what does your ambition look like?

Do you think ambition is a Christian kind of idea?

### **4:1-8 Ambition #1 – ‘to please God...more and more’**

V1-2

Does God really care about being ‘pleased’?

What does this suggest about God?

‘do this more and more’: is this what is lacking in their faith? (3:10)

Is the pleasure of God lacking in our faith?

V3-8

‘Sanctified’? Any ideas what that’s all about?

How many reasons for avoiding sexual immorality

When is sexuality immorality?

Is God’s pleasure against our pleasure?

### **4:9-10 Ambition #2 – ‘love each other....more and more’**

More and more??? When is enough enough???

What about my love-limits?

What are your love-limits? And when are they OK?

### **4:11-12 Ambition #3 – ‘a quiet life’**

This doesn’t *look* very ambitious. Why can Paul call it ambitious?

What’s bad about dependence? I thought dependence was good among brothers and sisters?

### **Are you ambitious enough in your pleasing of God?**

Is there an area we have covered tonight in which you would love to please God more?

Why not share and pray about it?

## I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

### Starters

What does the phrase *'He will return to judge the living and the dead'* mean to you? Quick....write down your first three thoughts and rate each of them out of 10 in importance to your faith. Share them with the group quickly.

We'll get back to this later.

### Read 4:13-18

What does Paul mean when he says that some of them are 'asleep'? 4:13,14,15 Why that term, and not the more direct expression in 4:16? What does 'asleep' suggest that 'dead' does not? Is it significant?

Who are those who 'have no hope'? 4:13

It is natural for people to grieve when someone they love dies. Is Paul saying Christians shouldn't? How does our belief affect that? 4:14

Do you have personal experience of a difference between Christian and non-Christian funerals? Are they that different?

There are two groups of people Paul talks about: those who are alive when Jesus returns, and those who are not. What are the differences between what happens? What are the similarities? Why?

Why does Paul need to write to the Thessalonians about this? 4:13 Why does he tell them to encourage each other? 4:18

Are there any circumstances when this knowledge holds little comfort for us?

### Read 5:1-11

The 'Day of the Lord' is a BIG idea in the bible. Do some work in pairs and report back on it to the group. Take a passage each.

*Isaiah 2:10-22*

*Joel 2:28-32*

*2 Peter 3:8-13*

There are very different descriptions of that day, (more if you add in I Thessalonians 4:16-17) – how are we to understand these different descriptions?

The 'Day of the Lord' has both expected and unexpected aspects for us. What are they? (5:2-4) How do the images of a 'thief' and 'labour pains' illustrate it?

Paul contrasts night/dark with day/light. What does he use them to show?  
What are the characteristics of those who belong to the day vs. the night?

*Day*

*Night*

Paul uses the term 'asleep' differently in 5:6 to 4:13 or 5:10. What does he mean by it in 5:6?

What does it mean for us to be 'sober' and 'awake'? 5:6,8 How are we avoid being 'drunk' 5:7?

Augustus, who reigned at the time of Christ's birth, had ended a period of civil war. The Thessalonians, and the rest of the Roman empire, were enjoying this peace and the prosperity that came with it. The 'Pax Romana' (see 5:3) We also enjoy peace and prosperity in this land. 'Pax Australis'.

What should Australians hear from this?

Could they hear this?

### **Think**

'He will return to judge the living and the dead' is a much forgotten part of the Apostles Creed...yet in 4:18 and 5:11, Paul urges us to encourage each other and build up one another with this news of Jesus' return.

What has tonight's study added to your list of three quick thoughts?

How should we build one another up with the news that Jesus is returning?

### **Do**

Think as a home group about one person who your group could encourage in this news, and write down practical thing you can do to encourage them in it.

### **Pray**

Why not spend time (without sharing – or that could take all night!) praying for people by name who you do not want to be found wanting when Jesus returns.

## I Thessalonians – A Faith that is Precious

### Miscellanea

At the bottom of the shopping list are a few quickly-scrawled words. 'Eggs, mayonnaise, bananas'. I understand that these are random thoughts, miscellanea....and if I don't get them the house won't grind to a halt.

Paul often has some last minute, breathless, miscellaneous thoughts at the end of his letters. But they shouldn't really be left out.

Let's do something different and be thoroughly practical.

We are going to divide up into pairs and take one or two miscellaneous thoughts each. Spend 10 minutes thinking hard about what we need to do as a church to attend to these matters. I ha

### Miscellaneous Thoughts Demanding Practical Application

Passage	Topic	Questions?	Things to rethink, repent of, do, tell others to do...
5:12-13a	'Those over you in the Lord...'		
5:13b-15	'Living in peace with each other'		
5:16-22	'Prayer and prophecy'		

### Blamelessness.....

The prayer of v23 turns up the heat on what we have just talked about. Do any of those issues press even more hard on your conscience as you consider this prayer?

As you consider this, the faithfulness of God is a great and necessary fact! But isn't this just a cop-out for your conscience?