**Community Group Discussion Guide**

**1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

**Sermon Overview**: This sermon will emphasize how the Holy Spirit changes us. We will explore the differences between only hearing the Word and hearing the Word full of conviction and Holy Spirit power.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10*

*Set the Context…*

**Context**: During his second missionary journey, the Apostle Paul entered the city of Thessalonica to preach the gospel (Acts 17:1-9). According to his custom, Paul entered the synagogue of the Jews and reasoned with them from the scriptures that Jesus had to suffer for sins on the cross, and be raised from the dead. The Holy Spirit used the proclamation of the gospel and “***...some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women***.”

(Acts 17:4) A church was birthed in Thessalonica of which the members were very dear to the apostle. 1 Thessalonians is written to encourage this church as Paul had been separated from them. He writes to iron out some of their end times theology and to exhort them to faithful Christian living while they await the Lord’s return. The opening chapter expresses his thankfulness after hearing about the continued growing faith of the believers. He details tangible fruits that the church is known for in their city, and their attributes serve as a measuring line for authentic faith for all of us.

**Commentary:** Paul shares that he constantly prays for the Thessalonians, thanking God for their ***work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*** (1 Thess. 1:3). These three attitudes are foundational elements of a relationship with Jesus Christ. He affirms his confidence that God had chosen these believers, electing them for salvation. Election is defined as God’s initiating will to save and change a person from the foundations of the world (see Eph. 1:3-4). This is evident because the gospel came to them ***not only in word, but also in power and the Holy Spirit and with full conviction*** (1 Thess. 1:5). The Thessalonians has received the word (v.6), and turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (v.9). God’s sovereign choice of them, and their responsibility to respond to the gospel by repentance and faith are both at work in their salvation.

 Paul encourages the Thessalonians because their faith has become an example for other believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Many onlookers can see tangible changes in their lives and can attest to the fact that the gospel has indeed brought them from death to life. The Thessalonian believers also had become missionaries for Christ, spreading the gospel in their city and beyond. “***For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything***.” (1 Thess. 1:8) All of attributes of faith give Paul great joy and gratitude to God for the work He has done in them.

*Share main truths of the passage along with verses that teach them* and discuss how to apply to our daily lives …

**Key Points**:
Thanksgiving for faith v.1-3
Confidence for faith v.4-6
Evidence for faith v.7-10

**Discussion and Application Questions:**

Verses 1-3

1. Consider people in your community group or those you have helped come to know and follow Jesus. Mention their names and share some things about their lives you can thank God for in prayer.
2. Of the before mentioned qualities, what would be the benefit of encouraging those people in those areas this week?
3. How can you prioritize praying for and with others during this time of crisis and isolation?
4. Faith, love, and hope are mentioned as attributes the Thessalonians demonstrated. Which of these would you say lacks the most in your life currently? What steps can you take to change in those areas?
5. How are you fueling your faith and steadfast hope when the entire world is gripped by fear?

Verses 4-6

1. What about the doctrine of election gives us reason to worship God?
2. How do both truths of God’s sovereign choice and human responsibility to receive the word of the gospel give you confidence in evangelism and making disciples?
3. Verse 5 says that the power of the Holy Spirit and conviction accompanied the preaching of the Word. How should this instruct the way we do ministry and share God’s truth with others?
4. What are examples of receiving the word of God in much conflict with joy?
5. How do we grow in our desire and willingness to receive God’s word with joy in the midst of conflict?

Verses 7-10

1. What are ways that you can ensure your faith is an example of obedience and trust to other believers through life-on-life discipleship?
2. Are there things in your life that would not set a good example of faith for other believers? How could you then demonstrate actual repentance and trust in the gospel to them?
3. How are you currently striving to be used so that the word of the gospel is sounding out from you? Your family? Your CG?
4. The Thessalonians turned from idols to serve the living God. Has God revealed any idols to you in your life?
5. What practical steps can you take to turn from those idols to God?
6. What are some of the idols of our community? How could we address our friends, neighbors, and co-workers on these issues with the gospel as a hope and solution?

*Share a key take away or challenge for the week…*

*Pray together in light of 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10…*

**Prayer Guide:**

Pray for our church that we would have the kind of faith that is evident and seen to all around us. Pray that our people would be engaged in seeing the word of the gospel sound forth from us. Pray that God would develop a culture of discipleship where faith is an example in life-on-life relationships.

Pray for our city that many would turn from their idols to serve the living God. Pray that the spirit of God would work with full conviction as our lost friends and family hear the word from us and that people would receive the word in great conflict and trial.

Pray for our world that missionaries would have great reason to pray with thanksgiving for the faith of those they are ministering to. Pray that God would instill deep faith and steadfast hope in Jesus Christ as people around the world are gripped by fear.