**Community Group Discussion Guide
2 Thessalonians 1:1-4**

*Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4*

*Set the Context…*

**Context:** Exact certainty on the background of Paul’s second letter to Thessalonica is difficult to obtain. Paul does not recall any past events as he did in his first letter, and most of his writing is theological and exhortative rather than reflective. Also, his letter does not significantly vary from his first letter; trials, joy, work, and the second coming of Christ continue to be his topics of interest.

While the topics and encouragements mostly parallel with the first letter, 2 Thessalonians is not entirely unoriginal. What distinguishes this letter from the first letter is its depth. Paul’s goal is to extrapolate the topics of Christ’s second coming and Christian work. These two subjects appear to have been distorted or fallen upon deaf ears as he attempts to explain their significance. In reference to the second coming, it appears that Paul’s message has been distorted by false teachers or impersonators of Paul (2 Thess. 2:2). For this reason, much of his second letter is an attempt to correct these misunderstandings. Next, he appeals for the Thessalonians to work diligently, as he did for their sake (2 Thess. 3:6-13). Evidently, the misunderstandings of the second coming of our Lord had led to idleness, which Paul addresses in detail. He urges his audience to be busy at work and not act as busy bodies (2 Thess. 3:11). It then seems that Paul is writing responsively out of the Thessalonian’s failure to obey his first letter. He is doing more than rewriting 1 Thessalonians, he is straining to impress these former matters upon his brother’s and sister’s hearts and minds.

With this being understood, it is not as though he does not recognize their perseverance in the faith. He is still thankful and proud (2 Thess. 1:3) of the church for holding fast in wake of the events of Acts 17:1-9, as they are still facing increased affliction and persecution (2 Thess. 1:4) His desire is their continued maturing and persevering in hope.

**Commentary:** Paul, as he did in his greeting in 1 Thessalonians, includes his co-laborers, Silvanus and Timothy, in his second address to the Thessalonians. He first affirms the Thessalonians validity as a church of “***God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ***” (2 Thess. 1:1). Then he blesses them by praying that “grace” and “peace” be with them (1:2).

 In similar fashion to his first letter, Paul is filled with gratitude for his brothers in Thessalonica, as their “***faith is growing abundantly***” (1:3). Encouragingly, they are not only growing in their faith, but are increasing in their love for one another. The Thessalonians are fulfilling the great commandment, loving the Lord God with all their hearts, while loving their neighbors as themselves (Matt. 22:37-39). In response to their faithfulness, Paul is motivated to boast about them to all the churches (1:4). Their “***steadfastness and faith***” under persecution are an encouragement for all believers. The Thessalonians in many ways are presented as a model of faithfulness during adversity.

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

**Key Points:**

* Greetings in grace and peace (2 Thess. 1:1-2)
* Thanksgiving and praise for faith (2 Thess. 1:3-4)

**Discussion/Application Questions:**

Verses 1-2

1. According to Acts 18:11, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were together on mission in Corinth for eighteen months while Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. How do you think they cultivated spiritual fellowship during this time?
2. How can we follow Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy’s model of life-on-life fellowship in our own community and discipleship groups?
3. Who is one person you can spend an hour of life-on-life fellowship with this week? (Fellowship ideas: get coffee, go for a walk/run, grab lunch, take your kids on a play date, phone call, etc.)
4. Paul verifies the Thessalonians authenticity as a church of Jesus Christ, what are some of the core doctrines/practices of the Christian faith we must affirm to be a church?
5. How can we practically equip our community and disciples with the core doctrines of the Christian faith?
6. Paul wishes grace and peace for the church in Thessalonica, what differences would it make in our community if we prayed and thought about each other as Paul spoke about the Thessalonians?
7. How can we practically seek to be like Paul in our love and care for other believers?

Verses 3-4

1. How would our outlook on the Christian faith change if we were thankful for every work God has done in our fellow believers?
2. If we believed that God ultimately does the work of growing people in the faith what actions should we take up for each other and those who aren’t yet in community?
3. What are a few ways that God has worked in our community and discipleship groups that you can be thankful for?
4. The Thessalonians were growing in faith and love for one another simultaneously, why do you think these two areas of Christian maturity correspond to each other?
5. It is evident that Paul seeks to intentionally encourage the Thessalonians, how has someone in your spiritual life encouraged you? What about their words or actions encouraged you?
6. What is one practical way that you can encourage someone in our community group this week?
7. The Thessalonians were known for their perseverance during trials, how do you think they were able to holdfast to their faith through trials? How are you implementing these things?
8. What are some truths in scripture that help you to remain faithful when you are faced with trials?

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

*Pray together in light of 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4…*

**Prayer Guide:**Pray for our church that we would be those who are increasing in faith and love. Pray that we would see tangible ways to love each other and encourage one another.

Pray for our city that God would heal division and people would learn to love each other because of the spread of the gospel.

Pray for our world that there would be many churches planted that we could give thanks to God for. Pray that believers in persecuted contexts would remain steadfast in faith and love.