**Community Group Discussion Guide**

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-16**

**Sermon Overview**: This sermon will emphasize verse 8, the importance of sharing the gospel and our lives in tandem.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16*

*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. The overall purpose of 1 Thessalonians was to encourage the church. The second chapter, specifically verses 1-16, focus predominately on Paul’s ministry and serves as both a defense and an exhortation. Sadly, there were many apostates and enemies of the faith during this time that attacked Paul’s character and attempted to destroy the church from within. For this reason, Paul outlines why he and his co-laborers shared the Gospel with the Thessalonians, the way in which they did so, and the result of God’s sovereignty and grace in the process.

**Commentary:** Chapter 2 begins with Paul addressing the Thessalonians stating, “***For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain***…” (v.1). Paul does so to defend his character and ministry before the Thessalonians, as well as give credence to Jesus’ Great Commission. Both Paul and the local church faced many enemies in Thessalonica who sought to destroy what God was doing ([Acts 17:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+17.5-6&t=NKJV) and [17:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+17.13&t=NKJV)). Nevertheless, as an ambassador of Christ, Paul endured to encourage and exhort the Thessalonian church to remain rooted in Christ. In so doing, Paul made three sweeping points to them: (1) a call to evangelize; (2) a call to disciple; and (3) a call to praise God. Paul stated his **“appeal to preach the Word does not spring from error or impurity, but from the Gospel God gave us”** (v.3). This was to emphasize that every Christian who is saved in Christ Jesus is also called to evangelize by sharing the Good News with others. More so, he goes on to say, **“so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.”** (v.8). Thus, Christians are not only called to share their faith, but also disciple those who have turned from darkness to light through an investment of time, energy, and love for them. Discipleship is the sharing of truth and life in the context of relationship. In turn, **“we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God…you accepted it…as what it really is, the word of God…”** (v.13). This is to say, when we see growth in fellow Christians, we are called to encourage one another and praise God for his grace, mercy, and faithfulness in making such growth possible.

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

**Key Points**:

* Christians are called to *evangelize* (v.1-6)
* Christians are called to *disciple* (v.7-12)
* Christians are called to *praise* (v.13-16)

**Discussion and Application Questions:**

Verses 1-6

1. How can we remind ourselves that our calling and efforts to be obedient are not “in vain”?
2. How can you/do you remind yourself (and others) of the Gospel when facing hardships for sharing/living out your faith?
3. How do you prepare to share the truth of Christ with others, knowing the message may be offensive to some?
4. Realizing we have “been *entrusted* with the gospel…” (v.4), how ought we view the call to share the Gospel with others?
5. When we face adversity evangelizing, do we recognize it as an opportunity to grow in our faith and reliance in God? Discuss how you can do so moving forward…

Verses 7-12

1. Do you intentionally look for opportunities to invest your life in those around you? How do v.7-8 speak to the need to do so—discipleship—as a follower of Christ…?
2. How can we grow in our love and affections for one another as fellow believers?
3. Biblical discipleship requires life-on-life investment and interaction among Believers. How does this shape your view of the church and need for authentic Christian fellowship and community?
4. What are simple, practical ways you can share your life with people you are trying to disciple in the gospel?
5. How can you personally “walk in a manner worthy of God” while also encouraging and exhorting others, too (v.12)?
6. In view of Paul’s ministry and the attacks he faced, why is your witness so important and how can you safeguard it?

Verses 13-16

1. Why is it important to acknowledge God at work in both our lives as well as the lives of other believers?
2. How can we express joy during chaos and grow to praise Christ despite hardships (as seen in Paul’s situation)?
3. When we praise the Lord for who He is and live in obedience, what message does that send to the world, and why does it matter?
4. How can you use this passage to share not only the Gospel but also your testimony with someone in your life?
5. Despite hardships or hindrances, how can we imitate Christ and encourage others to do the same?
6. Acknowledging the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, how does this impact the time you invest in it, the authority of it, and your praise to God for it?

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

*Pray together in light of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16…*

**Prayer Guide:**

* Pray for our church that we would embrace the truths shared in this passage, resemble Christlikeness in both word and action, and be intentional to share Christ with those around us, just as Paul, Silas, and Timothy did with the church of Thessalonica.
* Pray for our city that they would encounter Christians who would share the Good News; that they would repent of their sins and trust the Lord wholeheartedly; that they would be discipled and grow to replicate the example set forth by others.
* Pray for our world that in the midst of this pandemic people would question their mortality, search for answers, and encounter Christians who will share truth in love with them, pointing to Jesus as the Savior of the world.