

First Thessalonians

MARK IT UP

HomeGroup **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week 2: Apr 17th-23rd

Are we contagious? We've all tried to avoid being contagious in recent months, so it might take a bit of imagination to remember that it's not always a bad thing. This week we get to see how the Thessalonians became "infected" with the gospel and had a faith that spread far beyond their community. May we be as contagious as them!

Main Texts: 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10

Connect

1. Who has set a "contagious" example for you in some area of your life? What did that person do that you hoped to imitate or that was an example for you?
2. What did you find significant about the sermon or passage? What questions or thoughts did it raise for you?

Learn

3. Read the passage if you haven't already. In verses 4-5, what indicators do we see of God's role in the response of the Thessalonians to the gospel (literally, "good news") message spoken by Paul, Silas, and Timothy?

These verses tell us that God had chosen them and that the gospel had come in power and in the Holy Spirit. Altogether, God drew them to a saving faith. It reinforces the idea that every conversion is a supernatural event.

4. In verses 5-6, what role did Paul, Silas, and Timothy have as the Thessalonians heard and responded to the gospel message?

They had set an example for the Thessalonians in their conduct and words. They were people worth imitating in the faith.

5. Verse 6 describes how the Thessalonians faced *affliction*, yet *with joy in the Holy Spirit*. How could the unlikely combination of *affliction* and *joy* have contributed to their widespread impact on others (see verses 7-10)?

Affliction or opposition is often a kind of "proving grounds" for authentic faith. The affliction could have exposed an artificial or half-hearted allegiance to Christ. In this case, their joy was a means of authenticating their faith in the midst of affliction and likely caught the attention of anyone watching.

6. Paul recounts the Thessalonians' experience in verses 9-10. What key facets of the gospel message stand out in these verses?

These include turning from idols to serve God (we could include here the ideas of repentance from sin and confession of sin), waiting for Jesus' return, believing in the resurrection of Jesus, and confidence that Jesus has saved us from God's wrath against sin at the future judgment.

Apply

7. As we think about the description of how the Thessalonians came to faith in Jesus, what can we learn or be reminded of about how anyone comes to faith in Jesus?

This should remind us or teach us that God is actively at work every time salvation occurs. We might be tempted to think that it's up to us to be smart enough, clear enough in our communication, or have some other ability that will convince people to believe the gospel message. It's the Holy Spirit, though, who convicts people and draws them to a saving faith. We get to be instruments in God's hand, but only God can open blind eyes and soften hard hearts.

8. If given a choice, we'd likely choose a life without any affliction! With this week's passage in mind, what role can affliction play, though, in demonstrating to others the power of the gospel?

This is similar to question 5 above. Affliction and hardship are often used by God to display the genuine nature of His work. It's easy to be fooled or to fool others when circumstances are easy. The power of the gospel is vivid, though, in the face of trials.

9. If you are a follower of Jesus, to whom in your life are you an example of what it means to be a Christian? Think about specific names of people around you. What in your life is worth imitating?

Going Deeper

These verses give us a glimpse of the Thessalonians' move from idols to faith in God. In short, we get to see their testimony—the story of how they came to believe in and follow Jesus. Every Jesus-follower has a testimony. Each is unique, but they all share how the work of God transforms lives.

One of Calvary's values is, *confident witness*. We want to be a community that lovingly and boldly communicates the gospel message to others. One part of this witness often includes telling a personal account of how God has been at work in our own life. This week, think through how you would describe God's work during these parts of your life:

- What was your life like before you came to trust and follow Jesus?

- How you came to believe in Jesus. In other words, what happened?
- What your life has been like since coming to trust and follow Jesus. How would you describe the difference Jesus has made in your life?

These questions aren't a formula, but are a guide to get you thinking about how you have been personally impacted by the gospel. This "testimony" can be a powerful tool used by the Holy Spirit that leads others to turn "to God from idols to serve the living and true God."

We encourage each person in your group to share your testimony with the group.