



HomeGroup **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week 4: May 1st-7th

PICK 2-4 QUESTIONS YOU THINK WILL BE MOST HELPFUL FOR YOUR DISCUSSION.

Special note: Sermon questions will not be produced after the last week of this series on May 30th. We encourage our HomeGroups to break from meeting weekly over the summer so everyone can have a time of rest and reinvigoration before the fall.

Main Texts: 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20 (Note: Pastor Thomas focuses in on v. 13 in the online sermon, and cites Matthew 13:19-23 as an additional text.)

Connect

1. Take a minute to compare notes. What did you mark up from the passage this week?
2. What did you find significant about the sermon or passage? What questions or thoughts did it raise for you?

We may include a question on this in the next couple weeks, but it could be good to “connect” by talking about summer plans with your group if you haven’t already. While we are encouraging everyone to take a break over the summer, we also think it could be great for you to socialize together over the summer! Picnics, barbecues, camping, tropical vacations...think of all the possibilities!

Learn

3. Go ahead and read the passage if you haven’t already. What happens when someone accepts the word of God “as what it really is” (v. 13)? What do you think Paul means when he says that this word is “at work in you believers”?

There could be more than one way to understand this question! “What happens?” Well, we could say that God’s word “is at work” when someone accepts it. Their eyes are opened and hearts are softened to believe. We could say that their lives are transformed by God’s Spirit. God works in a way that causes spiritual growth to take place, even in spite of opposition from others.

4. Verses 14-16 reveal that the church in Thessalonica faced harsh opposition from their “own countrymen” as they received and accepted the word of God. What impact do you think this opposition might have had on their “young” faith?

The opposition the Thessalonians believers faced was likely from other Gentiles in Thessalonica who would fall under the category of paganism in terms of their religious beliefs. Although somewhat speculative, it's possible that these "countrymen" were especially opposed to the claims to ultimate authority that Christians were committed to (i.e., "Jesus is Lord" vs. "Caesar is Lord"). You could not be loyal to Rome and to Christ (at least in their thinking). From a human point of view, we would think that opposition would be the last thing we'd want to happen. In God's ways, though, the opposition tested and surely strengthened the faith of the Thessalonians. It helped demonstrate the genuineness of their faith (see 1 Peter 1:6-7).

5. Paul uses the words, "but Satan hindered us" in verse 18. We don't know the details of what prevented Paul from returning to Thessalonica, but what do these words reveal about his belief about the nature of the opposition he faced?

Pastor Thomas does not give attention to this verse, but we can see from it that Paul understood the opposition to be rooted in the spiritual battle (remember our previous series). Humans may have been against Paul, but it was a spiritual issue at its core. It's critical for us to remember this in the situations we face with gospel ministry.

6. What do Paul's words in verses 17-20 express about his feelings toward the Thessalonians?

Paul loves them deeply. We saw this in the previous passage as well (vv. 7-8 in chapter 2)

Apply

7. What prevents people from accepting the Bible "as it really is"—God's word? What is your view on the ultimate source of the Bible? Is it a human-created collection of books, or is it God's word?

Simply put, unbelief keeps people from believing. In more specific terms, there are many different forms of unbelief. People may dispute the historical reliability of the Bible or believe it is contradictory. They may have past experiences where someone misrepresented Christian faith or was even abusive.

If someone in your group expresses objections to the Bible's authority, feel free to use it as an opportunity for additional conversations about why the Bible is trustworthy. Get in touch with us if you're not sure how to do this!

8. This passage reminds us that God's word is powerful, yet we can feel discouraged when we don't see that power unfolding as we expect. What does the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:19-23 remind us about the difference between our role and God's in sharing the gospel message?

In the parable, the sower's job is to cast the seed out, not to be responsible for making the growth happen. The growth depends on the condition of the soil. This hopefully gives

us a feeling of relief as we are free from producing results that only God can give. We sow. God causes the growth.

9. Opposition is a recurring topic in this letter, and Paul commends the Thessalonians for how they imitated the kind of faithfulness or steadfastness that others had displayed in Judea (i.e., the region in and around Jerusalem). What can we do to encourage each other to imitate their example in our own lives today?

Opposition today for us looks very different from what happened in Jerusalem and in Thessalonica in the first century. Even so, the role of Christian community is essential in our lives. The Holy Spirit uses other believers to provide us with encouragement, support, and strength as we face opposition in our faith.

Going Deeper

Pastor Thomas mentioned in the online sermon how Calvary is committed to what we call *Biblical Authority*. In short, this means we submit our lives to the teaching of God's Word. Here's what we believe about the Bible (from the Evangelical Free Church of America's statement of faith):

We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

As you read through this statement, what do you find significant? What's confusing? Do you agree with it, and, if not, what do you disagree with?

If you have questions that your group can't answer, please reach out to the staff so we can help!