

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Our Mission: Reaching out to leaders who can change the world.

1st Thessalonians

Jan 2017

MODEL FOR MINISTRY: FAITH

INTRODUCTION

What causes a person to really change his or her attitudes and behavior?

OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Note: Paul originally spent just three weeks there before opposition from the Jews forced him to leave. He is writing to encourage the new believers and to clarify some of their perceptions of how to live the Christian life. Even though it was one of the largest cities (200,000) in the Roman Empire, it was a "free city" and locally governed so they jealously guarded their independence. As a commercial port and center of international land commerce, they were wealthy and diverse. Many church members were Jews who converted to Christianity and some were converts from pagan religions. All religions were averse to conversions. "Chosenness" (vs. 4) was a term the Jewish people applied exclusively to themselves; Paul applies it here to a church that included many Gentile converts.

1. For what is Paul thankful? Vv 2-5
2. What difference would it make to know they (you) were chosen by God? Vs 4
3. Whom did the Thessalonians imitate? Vv 6-7 Why?
4. Why was it important for Paul to live among them rather than "preach from afar?" Vs 5; Matt 7:15-20
5. How does one present the gospel with power and deep conviction? Vs. 5; **Rom 15:17-19; Acts 19:11-12**
6. What was the evidence (observable results) of their conversion (transformation)? Vv 6-10
7. How do you balance your efforts with those of the Holy Spirit? **Rom 8:9**
8. How might "works" become a problem for believers? Gal 3:3; **Phil 3:10**
9. How did they model their faith and demonstrate their love? Vs 9
10. Who convinces people that Christianity is true? How?
11. How was the Thessalonians' hope visible for others to see?

APPLICATION

- If your Christianity represents a lighthouse in the dark and dangerous pagan world, how brightly is your light shining? How is your hope visible for others to see?
- How can you present the gospel with power and conviction?

Candy, a fellow quadriplegic, was my exercise partner in physical therapy. Every day the therapist positioned our wheelchairs in front of a wall of weights and pulleys for an hour of strenuous exercise. I remember sweating and straining while Candy merely played at lifting weights.

Years later, when I returned to the hospital for a check-up, I ran into Candy. I was shocked. Her arms were thin and she looked weak and tired. As quadriplegics, we both had the same potential for gaining strength, but from lack of exercise, her muscles were atrophied and useless.

There are many Christians who, like Candy, are playing around, believing that the Christian life will just "happen" to them without any real commitment or tough obedience. As a result, they have very little power in their lives and no stamina when the hard times hit.

From Diamonds in the Dust by Joni Eareckson Tada