

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

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

1st Thessalonians

Jan 2017

Model for Ministry: *Encouragement*

INTRODUCTION

If you could make a surprise visit to someone in whose life you have helped spiritually, whom would you select? Why?

EXPLORATION

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

1. In verse 6, three things on the part of the Thessalonians caused Paul joy. These things showed that the Thessalonians had a right attitude toward *others*, toward *God*, and toward *Paul*. What were those things? Why is that such good news? **Matt 13:23**
2. How had Paul's work among the Thessalonians fared during his absence? Vv. 6-7; **1 Jn 2:5**
3. What do you think Paul means by "for now we really live" in verse 8?
4. What are the characteristics of someone who is standing firm in the Lord? **1 Cor 16:13**
*Note: stand firm (stēkete, a military term meaning not to retreat in the face of an attack)*¹
5. As we evaluate Paul's prayer life, for whom, for what, how and when did he pray?
6. Paul didn't just pray about shattering crises and overpowering emergencies. This showed that he had a "God-directed" rather than just a "God-rescued" life. What else can we learn from Paul's commitment, attitude and perspective on prayer?
7. Paul sent Timothy to help them. How do you help Christians in distant places? In your group?
8. According to Paul, who gets the credit when evangelism is successful? Vs 9
9. What does Paul mean by "be blameless and holy in the presence of Christ's return"? Vs. 13; **1 Cor 1:2**

APPLICATION

Who can you encourage this week... someone in your family, your Discipleship Group, your office or a distant friend?

John Buchan once described an atheist as "a man who has no invisible means of support." It may well be that our failure to live the Christian life well is due to our trying to live it without the help of God—which is an impossible assignment.²

People seldom think of encouragement as a gift because it seems so ordinary. But it isn't. Encouragement is actually quite rare {because it is seldom given} and it is so valuable {because it is so meaningful to the recipient}. Encouragement may be the perfect gift!

*According to research.... An average person's anxiety is focused on:
40% -- things that will never happen; 30% -- things about the past that can't be changed; 12% -- things about criticism by others, mostly untrue; 10% -- about health, which gets worse with stress; 8% -- about real problems that will be faced.*

It follows that 92% of our stresses or anxieties can be relieved by just a word of encouragement.

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¹ MacArthur, J. (2002). *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (82). Chicago: Moody Press.

² *The letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*. 2000 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the U. of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (197). Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.