



LOOK BACK

EVANGELISM-

How have you been partnering with God to reach the lost?

This is about who you are reaching out to with gospel inten. This can be intentionally saying hello to someone every day or actually sharing the gospel. It's about ways in which we work to share the love and beauty of Christ with others.

PRAYER REQUESTS-

Take time to share personal prayer requests with one another, then pray over them and your time together in the word before moving to LOOK UP.

LOOK UP

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 *Begin by reading this week's scripture out loud.*

What from the sermon on Sunday, or what as you just read aloud, stuck out to you?

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

The first 5 versus are a prayer of thanksgiving for the church in Thessalonica. Paul highlights their WORK OF FAITH, LABOR OF LOVE, and STEADFASTNESS OF HOPE (v3).

What is a work of faith?

What is a labor of love?

What is a steadfastness of hope?

1 Thessalonians 1:6-10

These actions (works of faith, labors of love, etc.) marked the Church of the Thessalonians, so much so that in v7 they are "an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia." V8 reads that "the word of the Lord sounded forth... your faith in God has gone forth everywhere..." The Thessalonians were amongst an oppressive culture who worshipped the Greco-Roman Gods, and yet they turned from their idols to worship the one true God.

What does our culture idolize? How do these worshipped idols bring oppression to Christians and the gospel?

What do you tolerate from culture or idolize that prevents you from excelling all the more in works of faith? Labors of love? Having a steadfast hope?

LOOK AHEAD

Matthew 28:19-20, The Thessalonians allowed the gospel to not just influence their life but to completely transform it despite persecution. They were grounded in their relationship with Jesus, passionate about their calling to reach the lost, and hopeful about their future. A biblical commentary on 1 Thessalonians

by Mark Howell states that “God is not as interested in what we do for a living as He is in how we live in the midst of the work He is doing.” God gifts us with the privilege of working with him to reach the lost.
What is one way this week you can excel in evangelism through works of faith?

The same commentary also mentions, “where there is not love it does not matter what we say, it does not matter what we know, and it does not matter what we do. That is how vital love is to the Christian faith.”

What is one way this week you can excel in evangelism through a labor of love?

“A man can endure anything as long as he has hope, for then he is walking not to the night, but to the dawn.” Barclay

ASK- What is one way this week you can excel in evangelism through a steadfastness of hope?

PRAYER

End the evening by praying over our church and as individuals to remain grounded in our relationship with Jesus, passionate in our calling to reach the lost, and hopeful for the future so that we excel still more.



THE WELL

1 Thessalonians 2:1-16
Excel in Relational Discipleship- Juhan Kim
CG Curriculum- Week of March 8, 2020

LOOK BACK

REMEMBER & PRAISE-

How did you excel in evangelism through works of faith, labors of love, or steadfastness of hope this past week?

PRAYER REQUESTS-

Take time to share personal prayer requests with one another, then pray over them and your time together in the word before moving to LOOK UP.

LOOK UP

1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 *Begin by reading this week's scripture out loud.*

What from the sermon on Sunday, or what as you just read aloud, stuck out to you?

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Paul shows in Christian leadership that isn't about power, or even execution, but about RELATIONSHIPS, INTIMACY, and SERVICE. We should show a sincere love and commitment to those God has called us to disciple.

RELATIONSHIPS-

Paul in v1-12 displays deep love for the Thessalonians. In v7-8 he states, "but we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So being affectionately desirous of you..."

What does this analogy say about Paul's relationship to the Thessalonians?

How did Paul act like a nursing mother, affectionately desirous?

What does it look for us to be affectionately desirous in our relationships? Give examples of ways you have been, or could be.

Paul continues using familial language in v11-12, "For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God..."

How does this analogy continue to explain his relationship with the Thessalonians?

What does it mean/look like to exhort, encourage, and charge?

Why are these so important to Christian relationships?

INTIMACY-

The analogies Paul used are certainly intimate. He had many churches that we was on mission with and for, and yet the Thessalonians were his precious friends (v8). Intimacy comes with vulnerability and a willingness to share your life with another.

Do you share your life with people in your church? Why or why not?

Are there parts of your life that are difficult to be vulnerable in?

What truths about God can help you to have confidence in vulnerability?

What are ways that we can intentionally get to know people better? What can you do to let other know you better?

SERVICE-

Paul came to Thessalonica not for what he could get but what he could give (v4-11). Matthew 20:28 says, "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

How did Paul serve the church of the Thessalonians?

How should we serve those around us...our fellow believers & non-believers?

GOD'S WORD-

1 Thessalonians 2:13

V13 states, "and we also thank God constantly for this, that when you **received** the word of God, which you heard from us, you **accepted** it not as the word of men, but as what it really is the word of God, which is **at work** in you believers." The Thessalonians intellectually knew the word, internally accepted it as truth, and allowed it to transform their affections and directions as evidence of its work in them.

What is the difference between knowing God's word intellectually and knowing God's Word internally?

Name ways that the word of God transforms your affections and directions.

1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

V14 "For you, brothers, became imitators of the church of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you **suffered** the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved- so as always to fill the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!

Suffering will come to those who follow Jesus, how could/does relational discipleship help us endure?

LOOK AHEAD

Hebrews 10:23-25, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another in love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Ephesians 3:17-19, "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith- that you, being rooted and grounded with love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ, that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Why is relational discipleship so important to the life of a believer?

What can you do this week to excel all the more in relational discipleship?

PRAYER

Spend the first few minutes praying for specific individuals that you are in relationship with or asking God to reveal someone to you that you could be discipling or reaching out to.

After a few minutes have past, continue to pray for the church as a whole to have intimacy and service, allowing the word of God to be received, accepted, to transform, and pray to endure together.



THE WELL

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13
Excel in Steadfastness- Adam Watson
CG Curriculum- Week of March 15, 2020

LOOK BACK

REMEMBER & PRAISE-

How did you prioritize & excel in relational discipleship this week?

PRAYER REQUESTS-

Take time to share personal prayer requests with one another, then pray over them and your time together in the word before moving to LOOK UP.

LOOK UP

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13 Begin by reading this week's scripture out loud.

What from the sermon on Sunday, or what as you just read aloud, stuck out to you?

In Paul's letter we can clearly see the importance of loving one another. As Christians we may be saved by grace alone through faith alone, but God never intended for us to live life alone. We must WALK, SACRIFICE, SUFFER, and PRAY together in the grace and love of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

WALK TOGETHER-

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, 3:8-9 "For what is our **hope** or **joy** or **crown of boasting** before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our **glory** and **joy**... For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the **joy** that we feel for your sake before our God..." Paul declares that the Thessalonians are his hope, joy, crown of boasting, and even glory.

Why does Paul declare the Thessalonians his hope, joy, crown of boasting, and glory?

How can you like Paul see those you are partnering in the gospel with as your "hope", "joy", "crown of boasting", and "glory"? What does/would this look like?

How does this view help Paul excel in steadfastness? How can a view like this encourage us?

SACRIFICE TOGETHER-

1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 "Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith." Paul was willing to adjust his plans to accomplish God's plan. He was able to balance his desire to advance the gospel with his understanding that the work of the gospel was much bigger than his personal ambitions.

What sacrifices did Paul make for the Thessalonians?

How does this challenge you today to make sacrifices?

1 Samuel 15:22 says, "And Samuel said, 'Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice**, and to listen than the fat of rams.'"

Do you believe the reward God gives is greater than what you sacrifice here on earth for the gospel?

How does this truth help us to excel in steadfastness?

SUFFER TOGETHER-

1 Thessalonians 3:3-7, we see evidence of the suffering both Paul and the Thessalonians have and are enduring. Persecution, hardship and difficulty are expectations for the Christian; they were never meant to be exceptions. So, the real question is not will I face trouble? But, how will I respond when I face trouble?

- **1 Peter 4:12-12** "Don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead rejoice as you share in the sufferings of the Messiah, so that you may also rejoice with great joy at the revelation of His glory."
- **John 15:18-19** "If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you."
- **2 Cor. 12:9-10** "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, catastrophes, persecutions, and in pressures, because of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

How should we respond when trouble arrives?

What does it look like to excel in steadfastness in Christian community through suffering? How can we hold one another up and or pick one another up?

What does it look like to not only endure suffering, but to excel in steadfastness through suffering?

LOOK AHEAD

PRAY TOGETHER-

1 Thessalonians 3:10-13 "as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord come you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus will all his saints."

Paul shows us that we should be passionate, persistent, and purposeful in our prayers for one another.

To close this time in prayer, pray passionately and purposefully for one another and our church to grow in love, holiness, and hope through walking, sacrificing, suffering, and praying for one another.



LOOK BACK

REMEMBER & PRAISE-

How did you walk together, sacrifice together, suffer together, prayer together, etc. to excel in steadfastness this week?

PRAYER REQUESTS-

Take time to share personal prayer requests with one another, then pray over them and your time together in the word before moving to LOOK UP.

LOOK UP

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 *Begin by reading this week's scripture out loud.*

What from the sermon on Sunday, or what as you just read aloud, stuck out to you?

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

When we follow Christ, we commit to pursue him with our entire being, including our bodies. God's desire for us is that we would make him our greatest desire. King David's words capture Paul's desire for the Thessalonians: "As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you God" Psalm 42:1 That encapsulates what kind of commitment we must have if we desire to pursue God.

What is required of a person who desires to "walk and please God"?

How are ones' head, heart, and hands included?

I'm willing to bet that ALL Christians at one point or another have struggled with some sort of impurity in regard to sexual immorality, whether by our own struggles and choices, or because of the sin of others. We have therefore likely felt guilt, shame, or even experienced trauma.

What gospel truth do we need to tell our souls in the midst of this?

Find specific scriptures, read them aloud, and pray them over yourself and those you are meeting with.

God uses very explicit and strong language to warn us about the dangers of sexual impurity.

- **Hebrews 13:4** "Marriage must be respected by all, and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge immoral people and adulterers."
- **Ephesians 5:3** "But sexual immorality and any impurity or greed should not even be heard of among you, as is proper for saints."
- **Colossians 3:5-6** "Therefore, put to death what belongs to worldly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, God's wrath comes on the disobedient."
- **1 Corinthians 6:15-20** "Don't you know that your bodies are a part of Christ's body? So should I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of a prostitute? Absolutely not! Don't you know that anyone joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For Scripture says, The two will become one flesh. But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Run from sexual immorality! 'Every sin a person can commit is outside the body.' On the contrary, the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body. Don't you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body."

Why is sexual immorality so harmful to a believer?

With a sex-saturated culture, how do we “control” (v4) our bodies to “abstain” (v3)? Give practical examples.

We must not only abstain for ourselves, but v6 tells us, “that no one transgress and wrong his brother...”

How does sexual immorality transgress against and defraud or wrong another human being?

Paul in v4 and again in v7 states that we are to control our body in holiness and honor and are not called for impurity but holiness.

What is Christian holiness? How is it opposed to sexual immorality? How do we pursue/walk in holiness?

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

As a Christian, we must take holiness seriously because nothing about our lives is insignificant. Everything we say and do sends a message to the world about who God is. We therefore must live out externally what Jesus has done for us internally. Paul tells us in v9-12 that we are to “aspire to live quietly,” “mind your own affairs,” and to “work with your hands.”

What does it mean to “aspire to live quietly”? “mind your own affairs”? “work with your hands”?

How does this way of living allow us to be a light to the world and excel in Christlikeness?

LOOK AHEAD

Our lives are the platforms from which we share Jesus with the world. The foundation of these platforms is the way in which we live out the gospel for better or for worse. Philippians 1:27 states, “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.”

What about excelling in Christlikeness (holiness) will oppose today’s culture?

Why is it important to oppose culture through purity, living quietly, minding our own affairs, working with our hands, etc.? What attributes of God do we portray to the world by living this way?

How will you excel in Christlikeness this upcoming week?

PRAYER

End by praying over the things discussed in the word through the A.C.T.S. model. Examples are given below.

- *A: Adoration is an act of praise and worship*
 - *Praise and worship him for his holiness, purity, that Jesus is literally the light of the world, etc.*
- *C: Confession*
 - *Ask God to forgive us, where we have desired other things more than himself, where we have not help to purity, or been good representations of Him to the world around us.*
- *T: Thanksgiving*
 - *Thank God for Jesus. Thank he is our fulfillment and the atonement for us. That in him we can leave our old self behind and walk in new life, that we are clothed in his righteousness, etc.*
- *S: Supplication*
 - *Pray that we would make God our greatest desire and excel in Christlikeness*



LOOK BACK

REMEMBER & PRAISE-

How were you able to excel in Christlikeness this week? Were you able to through purity, living quietly, minding your own affairs, working with your hands, etc.?

PRAYER REQUESTS-

Take time to share personal prayer requests with one another, then pray over them and your time together in the word before moving to LOOK UP.

LOOK UP

1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11 *Begin by reading this week's scripture out loud.*

What from the sermon on Sunday, or what as you just read aloud, stuck out to you?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

We read in these verses that the Thessalonians were concerned as some people have died (those who are asleep), and they are not sure what that means for the future. Paul is telling the Thessalonians that their hope is secure, and we can rest assured that our hope is not mere wishful thinking, “we will always be with the Lord” (v17).

- **Romans 8:38-39**, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- **Ephesians 1:13-14** “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
- **John 14:1-3** “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

What do we hope in as Christians?

How do these scriptures let us trust that our hope is secure?

We will all experience the devastating loss of a loved one in our life. V13 tells us “that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.”

What does this mean? How does our hope change the way we deal with grief?

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

The Day of the Lord is common in the Old Testament prophets and refers to the great and terrible day when Yahweh will intervene to punish the disobedient and save the faithful.

- **Joel 2:1-3, 10-11** “Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; like has never been seen before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations. Fire devours

before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them... The earth quakes before them' the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?

- **Joel 2:31-32** "The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who call on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

From these few verses we can see parallels with Paul's words to the Thessalonians in reference to a trumpet sound, light, darkness, an army and the need for armor, etc.

What causes your heart to be "asleep" or "not sober?"

How can these scriptures and truths call us to be "awake," "sober," "not sleep"?

In John 8:12, Jesus tells us "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." We "are not in darkness" (v4), we are "children of light...children of day (v5)," "for God has not destined us for wrath (v9)".

How do we excel in hope and encourage one another in these truths as we wait to be taken home?

How should we live in light of Christ's imminent return? Give some examples.

LOOK AHEAD

We are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus and God has given us the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of our salvation. Our hope is sealed, secured... "for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me (2 Tim. 1:12)."

Do you live like this is true? Why or why not?

How can you practically live and excel in hope this upcoming week?

PRAYER

End your time praying to live as those redeemed, children of light, children of day, sealed with the promise, and utterly secure. Pray that we would excel all the more in hope knowing that we wait for Jesus to take us home.



LOOK BACK

EVANGELISM-

How have you been partnering with God to reach the lost?

This is about who you are reaching out to with gospel intent. This can be intentionally saying hello to someone every day or actually sharing the gospel. It's about ways in which we work to share the love and beauty of Christ with others.

PRAYER REQUESTS-

Take time to share personal prayer requests with one another, then pray over them and your time together in the word before moving to LOOK UP.

LOOK UP

1 Thessalonians 5:12 – 28 *Begin by reading this week's scripture out loud.*

What from the sermon on Sunday, or what as you just read aloud, stuck out to you?

1 Thessalonians 5:12 – 18

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians with several exhortations and encouragements to continue in this Christian way of living that is counter-cultural to the way others live around them. He first tells us to honor our leaders and to disciple one another.

HONOR OUR LEADERS-

In v12-13 Paul calls us to “respect those who labor among you... over you in the Lord... admonish you...to esteem them very highly in love.”

Why does Paul deem this as important to the Church of the Thessalonians? Why would it be important for us?

What does it look like to respect and esteem Pastors in love? Give practical, even real examples.

DISCIPLE ONE ANOTHER-

V14-15 give the ways in which Paul urges us to disciple; “admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all...don't repay evil for evil...be good to one another and to everyone...”

Which of these do you feel you excel in?

Which of these are more difficult for you to carry out? Why?

V16-18 continue calling us to “rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God...do not quench the Spirit... test everything... hold fast to what is good.”

Why can we rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstances? What does this practically look like?

What does it look like to pray without ceasing?

Why does Paul encourage the Thessalonians not to quench the Spirit?

LOOK AHEAD

Galatians 5:22-25, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such things there is not law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

How does the fruit of the spirit help us excel in God’s work laid out by Paul in Thessalonians 5:14-18?

Be encouraged that these are things we do not muster up by our own effort or merit but are gifted to us by Christ’s sacrifice and through the Holy Spirit. We spend our lives in the sanctification process that makes us more and more free from sin and more and more like Christ who literally IS them all... God is love, Prince of Peace, etc. In V23-24 Paul prays God would sanctify the Thessalonians completely and trusts that “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”

What would it look like to excel in God’s work in your own life? Be specific.

What would it look like to excel in God’s work as a community group? Be specific.

What would it look like to excel in God’s work as a church? Be Specific.

PRAYER

Paul in V27 says, “I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.” To the end the series read the ENTIRE book of 1 Thessalonians aloud in one sitting.

- 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 *Excel in Evangelism*
- 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 *Excel in Relational Discipleship*
- 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13 *Excel in Steadfastness*
- 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 *Excel in Christlikeness*
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 *Excel in Hope*
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 *Excel in God’s Work*

After finishing reading the letter, pray that we as individuals, a community, and a church would excel still more.



RESOURCES

Sermon Direction	<p>WK 1: Excel in Evangelism- As we kick off 1 Thessalonians we get an intro to this young church's flourishing faith. Though young (like The Well) the Thessalonians are proving to be faithful to god, even though the culture around them doesn't value or celebrate their conversion to Christianity (v6). This is encouraging everyone everywhere (v7-8) to likewise be rooted deeply in God (v3), and to let their faith be seen and experienced by the culture around them (v5-6).</p> <p>Likewise, as a church we're in a culture that doesn't celebrate Christianity. We may even meet some hostility, much like the Thessalonians because of this. But we too need to <u>excel still more</u> at sharing our faith with them, being unashamed of the gospel, allowing our works, our character, and our words to showcase deeply the trust in Jesus and our belief in the gospel. How can we allow our faith to continue to grow, and also continue to challenge and encourage those around us? AS God has given us the mantle of the gospel in this city, how do we make sure we become a witness to all around us about the power of Christ's resurrection (v10)?</p> <p>WK 2: Excel in Relationship Discipleship- As Paul continues this letter he moves from external evangelism to internal discipleship (1), formed around the importance of relationship. Paul uses extremely intimate (7-8) metaphors with the Thessalonians (7, 9, 11) showing them what the essence of Christian leadership and Christian discipleship is based on: relationships. Paul shows that Christian leadership isn't about power, or even execution, but about relationships, intimacy, and service. And just like Jesus was persecuted from his own people (15), now Paul (and likewise the Thessalonians) face persecution. They share in this together, and therefore should be unified in Christ (14) for the sake of the gospel, knowing that just as Jesus overcame, so will we.</p> <p>Likewise, we too should be focusing on our own internal growth. We should have an affection for the people God has called us to shepherd, and should love them, and long for their growth and development in Christ. IF we're not making disciples, we're missing the relational investment in others that helps catapult the gospel and helps individuals stay in the faith. If we are discipling others, we should excel still more in the making of disciples. Do we love them like mothers and fathers? Do we love them like brothers and sisters? Are we helping them develop and, through this, bless others?</p> <p>WK 3: Excel in Steadfastness- Paul feared that though there was faithfulness, initially amongst the Thessalonians, that the suffering may have caused them to lose heart, or not grow strong in the faith (3, 5). Therefore because of Paul's strong love (17-18, 5), he sends Timothy to them to make sure they're rooted (2). And much to Paul's delight, they're not just surviving, but thriving! And they also miss and long to see Paul as much as he longs to see them (6). This encourages Paul not just in their steadfastness, but also to remain steadfast himself (7-9). Paul's discipleship of them is his main reward (19) and therefore, he prays deeply for them that they would grow in love, holiness, and hope (11-13).</p> <p>We too should be concerned if others are staying in the faith, particularly when the culture begins to press in around them. Do they still have the same love for God and the church as they originally did? Are we willing to make sacrifices to "check in" on them to make sure? Do we excel still more in doing what it takes to help them establish (17). Also are we those people who are being rooted in the faith, despite what is happening around us, and we experience persecution as well? We should excel still more in love, holiness, and hope (12-13), in order to help make this a reality.</p>
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	<p>WK 4: Excel in Christlikeness- Paul moves into the “action oriented” portion of his letter, encouraging the Thessalonians to continue to grow in the very ways he just prayed over them in chapter 3 (Love, Holiness, Hope). Here Paul encourages them to excel still more in holiness. Paul doesn’t want them to get caught up in the sexually promiscuous culture that is around them (3-8), but to follow Jesus’ teaching on purity because he takes this seriously (7-8). Additionally, Paul encourages them to be known by their love and service towards others around them (9-12). Though they do this already, Paul encourages them to excel still more (10) in this, that the culture sees this, and allows it to be a witness to the gospel (2 Thes. 3:11-13).</p> <p>We too, no matter how much we’ve killed sin in our lives, should excel still more in the laying down of our old life, and embracing and walking in the life of Christ, which comes through faith and obedience in him. This means walking in purity and serving and loving the way that Christ has loved and served others. If we are to be a light to the city around us, showcasing the gospel, it’ll take us taking holiness seriously (there’s something better than what’s around you), and us being willing to serve others sacrificially, pointing towards something greater.</p> <p>WK 5: Excel in Hope- Paul now moves towards addressing some of the questions the Thessalonians raised focusing on the importance of hope for the Thessalonians. Some people have died, and they’re concerned about what this means for their future. Paul encourages them that not even death will separate us from Christ or each other. Paul draws extensive parallels between the current Greek culture (return of Caesar, Peace & Security propaganda through war, etc.), and the way Christ will rightly return and rule; all while judging those who have ruled inappropriately on earth, reminding them that their suffering is not in vain. Because they have this hope, they should excel still more in reminding each other of this reality (18, 11), looking towards the future while living purposefully in the present.</p> <p>We too should think purposefully and frequently about our future hope. If all of what is in Scripture is true, then this is not our true home. The Kingdom is approaching, and it is worthy of our sacrifice, our holiness, our lives. It is the reminder that one day all things will be made right. We should remind each other of this and excel still more as we see the day drawing near (Heb. 1:25)</p> <p>WK 6: Excel in God’s Work- Paul concludes this letter with several exhortations and encouragements among the Thessalonians to continue in this Christian way of living that is counter-culturally to the way others live around them. This wraps up Paul’s themes of love, holiness, and hope, reminding the Thessalonians that following Christ is worth it, because of His faithfulness towards us. IT is important that not only this church gets this truth, but all churches (27) as we walk in God’s grace in and for this world around us (28).</p> <p>We, likewise, should be striving towards each of these realities. We should be discipling others into strengths and out of weaknesses (14). We should honor our leaders, do good to each other and all, pray always, rejoice always, give thanks always, test everything, more, more, more! Always, everything, all, none; Paul speaks in absolutes because he wants his disciples pure in Christ, as we should too. We should excel still more in the word God has called us to do personally, and corporately, because Jesus is worthy (24).</p>
Background Info.	<p>WHO?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Paul</u>- a Jewish man who was forever changed by an encounter with Christ (Acts 9). Paul wrote the majority of the New Testament books. • <u>Silvanus</u>- Or Silas (Acts 15:22), co-laborer with Paul on his missionary journey • <u>Timothy</u>- discipled by Paul and co-laborer with Paul on his missionary journey. The books of 1 & 2 Timothy were letters written to him from Paul.

	<p>WHAT? <i>This letter is Paul’s attempt to reconnect with the Thessalonian Christians after receiving a report from Timothy that they were doing more than okay, they were flourishing despite intense persecution (See Acts 17 for background on Paul’s first mission to Thessalonica with Silvanus and Timothy).</i></p> <p>WHERE? Thessalonica</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Capital of the Greek Province Macedonia of the Roman Empire</i> • <i>North of the Greek Providence Achaia of the Roman Empire</i> • <i>Population over 100,000</i> • <i>Flourishing center of trade and philosophy</i> • <i>Religiously- committed to the Greco-Roman gods</i> <p>WHEN? <i>Most likely the earliest letter we have of Paul’s.</i></p>
<p>THEMES</p>	<p>1 Thessalonians is a letter that is littered with important themes for any local church; discipleship, suffering well, evangelism, holiness, unity, etc. Paul is writing to a very young (new) church, experiencing the hardships of rejecting the culture around them, and surrendering their lives to Christ. However, they are not folding the to the culture, but they’re excelling in Christ! Paul encourages them throughout this letter to be filled with love towards others, to promote the hope of the gospel amongst themselves and towards the world, and to walk in holiness as a model of the counter-cultural (but better) way of the gospel. Though they are actually excelling greatly in the faith, particularly considering the circumstances, our King Jesus is worthy, so Paul encourages them over and over to <i>Excel Still More</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipleship – We need to continue to be focused on, and even drill into, our desire to make disciples and to be disciples as a church. Thessalonians gives great relational thought on why discipleship is valuable, and how one’s heart should be towards others. Paul’s discipleship of others is one of his biggest missions and biggest source of encouragement as he thinks about the Kingdom to come; so it should be for us as well. • Personal & Corporate Growth – Paul’s encouragement throughout the letter of 1 Thessalonians to think or do something “more and more” is an encouragement to us too. We should not be content with where we are in Christ, or where he has us as a church, but seek to <i>excel still more</i> in the ways of Jesus, and the promotion of this gospel message that is the hope of the world. We need to continue forward into more as a church, and as individuals. Thessalonians is a continual encouragement to do just this. • Sin/Holiness – Our church lives in an overly sexualized culture and struggles with sexual purity. Just as this is addressed in 2 Timothy, so it is addressed in 1 Thessalonians as well, encouraging us as a church to walk in holiness. Similarly, Paul addresses the need to stand firm in the faith forsaking the idolization of the culture and what people think, and to live lives that are devoted to Christ and service over our own personal agendas. • Hope – Despite the culture around us, Thessalonians gives us continual reminders of the hope to come. Whether we’re enduring suffering, confusion, or longing for something better, the gospel tells us there’s promise ahead. Paul reminds the Thessalonians to fix their eyes on the future while living purposefully in the present. We, likewise, should do the same.

The Well Distinctives	<p>EXALT-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>REACH THE LOST</u>- <i>every soul is one Jesus longs for</i> <p>DISCIPLE-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>EQUIP THE SAINTS</u>- <i>that all would live out their unique identity in Christ.</i>• <u>LIVE IN COMMUNITY</u>- <i>we don't find community; we fight for community.</i>
Other	<p>Bible Project- OVERVIEW of 1 Thessalonians: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=No7Nq6IX23c</p> <p>Blue Letter Bible- commentaries & helpful in understanding the Greek & Hebrew used in the bible. https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv/1th/1/1/s_1112001</p> <p>1 Thessalonians Commentary- https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1thessalonians.pdf</p> <p>Thebiblicalstory.org Commentary- http://thebiblicalstory.org/baylis/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/X1Thessalonians.pdf</p>