HIGHER AIM WITH DR. CURT DODD

Investing In The Lives Of Others

Becoming A Passionate Discipler | Part 5 | 1 Thessalonians 3

INTRODUCTION

Think about the reason you came to faith. Chances are someone reached out to you. Maybe it was a mother or father who brought you to church, or a friend from school who invited you along. Jesus followed this same strategy. In three and a half years of public ministry, He touched the crowds but invested most deeply in twelve disciples, and most closely in three. That small group multiplied over the centuries, and we are here today because of it.

The Apostle Paul carried that same heart. He was in Thessalonica for only about four weeks, yet when he was forced to leave, he could not rest until he knew how those new believers were doing. "When I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith" (*1 Thessalonians 3:5*). Ministry is not reserved for those in full-time Christian service. God has called every believer to invest in the lives of others, and in *1 Thessalonians 3* we discover five practical ways to show people we care about what is going on in their lives.

KEY POINTS

1. Put It In Pen

Paul could not be with the Thessalonians, so he wrote to them. A written word of encouragement has a power we often underestimate. Dr. Dodd shares that for years he has kept an "encouragement file" of notes people have sent him, and in seasons of discouragement he returns to it as a reminder that God has used his life for a purpose. Today a text or email counts too, though a handwritten letter may mean even more. If someone is on your heart, they are on God's heart. A few simple words could give them hope, direction, and the strength not to quit.

2. Put It In Person

When Paul could not go himself, he sent Timothy (*1 Thessalonians 3:2*). Nothing is more powerful than somebody with skin on. Being a passionate discipler does not require preaching a sermon or having all the answers. Often the most meaningful thing we can do is simply show up, walk with someone, and weep with those who weep (*Romans 12:15*). This is especially true when a person is walking through a hard season. Never discount the power of your presence.

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3. Put It In Praise

In verses 6 through 9, Paul celebrates the good news that the Thessalonians were standing firm in the Lord. He was applauding them. Many of us are quick to give others a piece of our mind, but as Dr. Dodd reminds us, that only leaves less for ourselves. What people need is encouragement. Our children do not always need correction; sometimes they simply need applause. Like Barnabas, whose name means "son of encouragement" (*Acts 4:36*), we can lift others up with our words.

4. Put It In Prayer

Verses 10 through 13 are Paul's prayer for this church. Nothing is more valuable than interceding for another person. To be a passionate discipler is to be a passionate intercessor. When God brings someone to mind, or when someone asks, "Will you pray for me?", pray right then. Dr. Dodd believes that one day in heaven, God will pull back the curtain and show us who had been praying for us all along. We may be surprised to learn how often we were carried by the faithful prayers of others.

5. Put It In Plans

Again and again Paul tells the Thessalonians, "I want to see you again." He did not leave his relationship with them to chance. His time in Thessalonica was brief, yet he cared enough to write two letters to them and to make plans to return. If we do not plan to be involved in the lives of other people, we never will be. A good intention is not enough. We need a plan, and then we need to work that plan.

In the end, it is all about relationships. People stay connected to a church because they are connected to other people, and that is why getting involved in a small group matters so much. But every relationship begins with the most important one of all: a relationship with Jesus Christ. When we fall in love with Him, we cannot help but want to see others fall in love with Him too.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Who invested in your life and helped you follow Jesus? What did they do that made the greatest difference for you?

2. Dr. Dodd gives five ways to show people you care: pen, person, praise, prayer, and plans. Which comes most naturally to you, and which is hardest? What is one step you can take this week to grow in that area?

3. Who is on your heart right now? Since they are on God's heart too, how might He want you to reach out to them?