

Reflecting on 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4 November 8, 2020

Introduction: In the first paragraph of 2 Thessalonians, Paul reports the tremendous spiritual growth in the members of the church:

1. Their faith was growing (v. 3-4)
2. Their love was increasing (v.3)

The message sends us back to 1 Thessalonians to discover what produces this exceptional growth. From 1 Thessalonians 3, we observe two factors of growth:

1. A key to growing faith and love is “life-on-life” instruction.
2. A key to growing faith and love is heart-to-heart prayer.

Back in 2 Thessalonians we find that all of the church’s growth is a result of God’s work in their lives. In summary, this passage teaches that *Growing faith and abounding love are the spiritual fruit of life-on-life instruction, heart-to-heart prayer, and all are a testament to God’s grace.*

Up for Discussion:

1. What take-home points stand out to you from this morning’s message?

2. Paul describes the Thessalonian church's faith as "growing abundantly" in 2 Thessalonians 1:3, and he says he "boasts" about their faith in verse 4. What evidence does Paul give for his boasting? (See the end of verse 4.)

3. How does God use trials and difficulties in the life of the believer? (Read James 1:1-12, 1 Peter 5:10, Phil. 4:6-7 for additional ideas.)

4. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3. What evidence does Paul give for describing the church's love as "increasing"?

5. Why is it easy to love some members of our church family, but more difficult to love others? Why is it important that we love both? (Hint: Consider Ephesians 4:32.)

6. In 1 Thessalonians 3, Paul sends Timothy to spend time with the church, though he also longs to be with them himself. This evidences Paul's understanding that discipleship is about more than transferring information; it's about life touching life. Can you think of a person whose personal investment in you has grown your faith and love? Share this story with your group.

7. In 1 Thessalonians 3, we also find Paul's heart-felt prayer for the spiritual growth and advancement of the church. Why do our prayers for other believers tend to focus on physical needs rather than spiritual needs? What can we do to change that tendency?