

Subject: The Power of the Gospel and Living in Expectation of Christ's Return

Check out the many discipleship resources for this teaching at [RESOURCES LINK]. For those wanting to view the teaching, us this [[TEACHING LINK](#)].

Dear Church Family,

Wow! Paul's message in this passage is so encouraging and freeing. Enjoy and grow!

Summary: This week's sermon explored the remarkable example of the Thessalonian church and what made them a model for believers throughout the ages. We examined how the Gospel came to them not merely as words, but in power and in the Holy Spirit, producing genuine transformation even amid persecution. The sermon challenged us to consider whether we truly know Jesus or simply know about Him, and how living in expectation of Christ's imminent return should radically shape our daily priorities and witness. The implications for our spiritual life are profound: when we grasp the supernatural power available through the Holy Spirit and live with the urgency that Christ could return at any moment, our faith becomes authentic, our testimony becomes compelling, and our lives become marked by purpose and holiness.

Takeaways: The Gospel is not merely information but supernatural transformation. The same Holy Spirit power that raised Christ from the dead and transformed the Thessalonians is available to us today. Everything about the Christian walk is supernatural and dependent on the Spirit of God—His leadership, power, gifts, and assurance enable us to boldly proclaim and live out the Gospel.

1. Our testimony matters and should follow the three-part model: our life before Christ, how we came to faith in Christ, and our life living in Christ. The Thessalonians' authentic, accessible testimony drew others to faith even amid affliction because it reflected genuine transformation, not religious performance.
2. Living in expectation of Christ's imminent return should create urgency and purposefulness in our lives. We cannot give others what we do not possess ourselves. As we await His return, we are called to embody and proclaim our Master Jesus—serving the living and true God with readiness that produces holiness, not living according to what seems good to us in the moment.

Take time this week to examine your own heart: Do you know Jesus, or do you simply know about Him? Are you living with the expectation that He could return at any moment? Let that truth shape your priorities, your witness, and your daily walk with Him.

In Christ,

Pastor Jim

A Gospel Example for the Ages – Part 2

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

I. Introduction: Rapture Ready?

1. In part 1 of examining the model church in Thessalonica church, we considered (1) the work God had done already in this young church, (2) the power of prayer, and (3) their “work of faith”, “labor of love”, and “great hope in Christ” as pillars of their living faith.
2. Some years ago, a young man initiated a discussion about whether Christ’s return was a motivating factor in life. When asked about this for himself, he said it should be and would be if he just knew when the Jesus was coming. He could then organize His schedule to make sure he was being about Jesus’ business when He returned.

When encouraged with Scripture that says it could be any moment and that he should always be living in anticipation of Christ’s return. It was sorrowful to hear the young man double and triple down that outside of knowing the time and day, the young man would live his life as seemed good to him in the moment.

You see, he knew about Jesus, but He did not know Jesus.

3. This young man was missing what is so evident in the Thessalonian church. He was missing what he and we desperately need...the power of the Holy Spirit that we may know, serve, and please Jesus.

All that we have or will read is only possible in the leading and power of the Spirit. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that brings Scripture alive. It is by the Spirit that we come to faith, grow in our faith, and are sealed in our faith. It is by the Holy Spirit we have the hope of Christ and that we have the assurance of our eternal relationship with Him. It is by the Holy Spirit that we are set free.

II. 1 Thessalonians 1:5: Supernatural Power

1. First up we note the Gospel came to the Thessalonians in word AND in power. In this first of three main points on v5, Paul's focus is on the Gospel or Good News; a theme he touches again in v10. The Gospel is God's way of inviting us into a restored relationship with Himself. We are all separated from Him for all eternity by our sins. The path to restoration requires a perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins. Jesus was that sacrifice. At Calvary He died, then rose from the dead three days later, and invited us to participate in His victory over death.
 - A. This Good News is hard to grasp. Oh, as we reflect on our character failures, most of us can understand that we are sinners. Most of us acknowledge a God of one sort or another. Indeed, all of creation testifies of a Creator. But now we are confronted with a God that willingly took on flesh AND died for me and you – what?! Then we are asked to grasp that He rose from the dead in bearing the wrath of the Father for my/our sins; Jesus did this for “me” – “what, why”? Because of His love for you – you see Jesus is so for you that He offers you the gift of salvation and eternal life with Him.
 - B. Simply put, the Gospel is the POWER of God unto Salvation. I suspect the young-in-faith hearts of the Thessalonians were still pounding from having grasped this truth so quickly...Paul not only reminded them of this incredible truth, but reminds us that the power to save is God's and His power is NOT limited by our sense of what is possible or not possible. These Thessalonians had been saved and joined into His church in just a short period...a miracle that testifies of His unlimited power.

Never confessed Jesus as Messiah? This good news is for you!

2. Second up, God's word is powerful. **John 6:63** says that God's words are spirit and life. **Hebrews 4:12** says the word of God is living and active, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. **2 Timothy 3:16** says “All Scripture is breathed out by God and

profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. **Ephesians 5:26** says the word of God sanctifies us. While there are dozens and dozens of additional Scriptures, perhaps most important is this last one I will note: In **Romans 1:16**, “the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”.

3. Finally, Paul noted that the Gospel came “in power and in the Holy Spirit”. This is pointing to some form of manifestation of the Spirit. A POWER that wasn’t only spoken, but observed and experienced. While Paul does NOT tell us the exact nature of this manifestation, Scripture offers us many pictures of this power.

A. This is the power we read about in **Acts 2** at the birth of the church with 120 Jewish men and women. This is the outpouring of the Spirit upon the gentiles we read in **Acts 10 and 11**. This is the power of the Spirit manifested through Paul as we repeatedly read in the accounts of Paul’s ministry where:

- i. The sick were healed;
- ii. Demons were cast out;
- iii. The dead were raised;
- iv. Religions were confronted;
- v. Prison doors opened;
- vi. People came to faith;
- vii. Churches were built.

B. The Gospel is NOT simply an idea. The Gospel is NOT a compendium of knowledge. The Gospel is the supernatural transformative power of God. The power of truth. The power of conviction and conversion. The power of forgiveness in bringing the dead to life. The power of a faithful, all-knowing, all-powerful, caring heavenly Father who is for you!

C. Paul’s words here are making clear is that it was not his history, ability to spin a story, clever wordsmithing, intellect, creative sermon illustrations, or any other thing, but one, that brought victory to the Thessalonians. That one thing was the Holy Spirit.

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You see the Christians walk is NOT designed as a humdrum daily existence occasionally punctuated by a movement of the Holy Spirit. You see, everything about Christianity is supernatural, dependent on the Spirit of God.

- D. The same is true today...I would say even more true the further we get from creation and the closer we get to the end of the church age – we desperately need the Spirit of God. We need His leadership, power, gifts, and assurance of His promises that we may be made bold to proclaim and live out the Gospel in bringing Jesus glory.

We have considered the source of the Thessalonian power in v5. Now in the balance of our passage, Paul more fully points to the purpose and motivations related to the moving of the Holy Spirit.

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III. 1 Thessalonians 1:6-9: Paying it Forward

1. In verses 6-7, we see the old adage of the imitation being the best form of flattery. The Thessalonians are paying forward what God entrusted Paul to pay forward to them and the generations to come. Please note they had both heard AND received the Gospel.
2. Paul did not attempt to diminish their “much affliction”. Instead, he helped them to see it in the context of salvation and their transformed lives. They were not suffering for suffering sake, but for the kingdom of God...for the Glory of Jesus.

They were suffering for a higher purpose. And so, even in persecution, the Christ-follower can have God’s joy and peace...because the child-of-God is an overcomer of their afflictions in the Glory of God. Turn with me to James 1:2-5:

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² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. - James 1:2-5

3. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Thessalonians had (1) counted the cost of receiving the Gospel, (2) *understood the war being waged*, and (3) had come to count victory NOT as the world does, but as being with Jesus on His terms. *The result was an example, with the word for example meaning a pattern of living radically Gospel-transformed lives IN their affliction – a reflection of the genuineness of their faith.*
 - A. The power of God had given them a beautiful, authentic, and compelling testimony. *A testimony that was attractive and accessible to those in their geographic region and was we read in verses 8-9, beyond.* The same is true of our witness of God.
4. As we read at the end of v9, the starting point of this largely gentile group was warring against God as they worshipped idols. *Into their lives came the Gospel...the truth of their separation from God and how to be restored in relationship with Him.* By the power of the Spirit, their sinful hearts had been turned toward God and they were now living and serving the “living and true God”. *Note: this is the 3-part model of a Christians testimony. Our life before Christ. How we came to faith in Christ. Our life living in Christ.*
5. Some, likely most, would hate, reject, and otherwise afflict them just as they hated Christ. *But some, maybe like you and me, would have experienced their testimony as inspirational, authentic, personal, accessible, uncomplicated, and, yes, hard (affliction).* This is a testimony that the Spirit of God uses to unveil our eyes that many say “I want what they have”.

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IV. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10: The Power of Christ’s Imminency

1. The power of the Gospel had given them life and serving Christ had given this young church a clear purpose of living out their faith in their neighborhood and beyond.
2. In verses 9-10, Paul again points them to the Gospel as we also read the imminency of Jesus return had given the Thessalonian

church an obvious sense of urgency. [They were living their lives expecting His imminent return.](#) So, they witnessed Him in their everyday living experience – a witness that brought many others to faith.

Indeed, the Thessalonians were so faithful that Paul praised them for working him out of a job.

3. The Thessalonians had been taught the truth about Jesus 1st and 2nd coming as well as His imminent return to rapture His church. [Yet, we also know that all of these were under attack in that day as well as today.](#) Some of these attacks are based in confusion, while others were birthed by Satan and worldviews or religions at war against God.

And so, while the people in the Thessalonian church were mostly gentile's, I think it's helpful to consider this topic in light of both the Old and New Testaments.

- A. What's clear is that the Jews did not understand the coming of Messiah. [Some of the accounts in the OT refer to Messiah as a suffering Servant while others refer to a conquering King.](#)
 - i. We know that they favored the conquering King as they desired to be out from under the bondage of Roman rule. [As a result they either thought there were 2 saviors OR diminished passages such as Is 53 speaking of Messiah's suffering.](#)
 - ii. They simply did NOT understand it was ONE Messiah with two comings. [What's more, the many veiled OT references \(Ps 2:11-12; 5:10-12; 27:4-5; Song of Sol 2:10-13; Zeph 2:2-3; Is 26:19-21\) to the rapture were just that, veiled and not understood.](#) As is so often the case, when people don't connect the dots we can often become indifferent or apathetic.

B. It is in the NT that we find veil fully lifted. It is through these passages we can better see and understand what was being revealed in the OT. [So, let's consider what the NT teaches:](#)

- i. 1st Coming: The Gospel. Jesus became man to suffer, die, and rescue mankind.
- ii. Rapture: As we read in **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**, **Matthew 24**, and **1 Corinthians 15**, Jesus is not coming to stay, but for His bride, the church.
- iii. 2nd Coming (Parousia): Jesus, the conquering King, is coming with the saints to judge, rule and reign over earth for 1,000 years before the final judgment and all eternity unfolds.

C. **John 14:3** says Jesus went to prepare a place for His followers. [Both Matthew 24:36 & 44 say we don't know the time of His return.](#) **1 John 2:28** commands what we are witnessing here in 1 Thessalonians; [specifically that John says we are to stay in Christ that when He appears we will be living a life marked by Him AND NOT ashamed of Him.](#)

D. While it can be argued the Jews could and even should have known when He was coming for it was prophesied, we do know when He came the first time. [The 2nd coming of Christ can also be known because of the precursor events of the rapture, the antichrist's peace treaty with Israel, and the tribulation period.](#) What is unknown AND imminent is the rapture.

There are Scriptures from at least a dozen NT books speaking to the imminency of His return for the church – the rapture. [For example:](#)

- i. **Titus 2:13**: “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

- ii. 1 Thessalonians 5:6: “Therefore let us not sleep... but let us watch and be sober.”
- iii. 1 Peter 4:7: “But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.”

E. In v10 we read of the Thessalonians “waiting for Jesus return”. This waiting spoke of their biblical hope, meaning their confident expectation that Christ will fulfill all His promises. This hope, in turn, led them to a purposefulness in readiness that produced holiness in them; and will in us IF we too live as though He is returning any moment.

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V. Closing: Proclaiming and Embodying our Master

1. The Church is to Proclaim our Master - Jesus

We are lay down our lives and walk in His power in proclaiming Him with a sense of urgency for He may return at any moment. As we talk with and actively listen to others regarding their hurts and hopes, Jesus will use us to pray with AND invite them into His kingdom.

2. The Church is to Embody our Master - Jesus

Yes in character, but also like the Thessalonians, in serving the living and true God.

3. We can do neither if we have not received and live out the Good News in the power of the Holy Spirit. For we cannot give others what we ourselves do NOT have.

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

A Gospel Example for all the Ages – Part 2

I. Introduction: Rapture Ready?

- Knowing Jesus and not just of Jesus

II. 1 Thessalonians 1:5: Power

- The Gospel in word and power.

Additional Scripture References: Jn 6:63; He 4:12; 2 Tim 3:16; Eph 5:26; Ro 1:16; Acts 2, 10, 11

III. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10: The Power of Christ's Imminency

- Do our lives reflect the imminency of the rapture?

Additional Scripture References: 1 Thes 4:16-17; Mt 24; 1 Co 15; Jn 14:3; Mt 24:36, 44; 1 Jn 2:28; Tit 2:13; 1 Thes 5:6; 1 Pe 4:7

IV. Closing: Proclaiming and Embodying our Master

- Being like Jesus.
- We cannot give others what we ourselves do not have.

5-Day Devotional

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

A Gospel Example for all the Ages – Part 2

Day 1: The Power of the Gospel

Reading: Rom 1:16-17, 1 Thes 1:4-5

Devotional: The Gospel is not merely information about God—it is the transformative power of God. When Paul preached to the Thessalonians, his words came with supernatural demonstration through the Holy Spirit. This same power is available to you today. The Gospel that saved you continues to transform you daily. Consider how God's power first broke through your darkness, convicting you of sin and drawing you to Christ. That same Spirit now dwells within you, enabling you to live victoriously. The Christian life is not about mustering human effort but surrendering to divine power.

Where do you need God's power today? In relationships? In overcoming sin? In witnessing? Invite the Holy Spirit to work powerfully through you, remembering that the Gospel's power is not limited by your circumstances or abilities.

Day 2: Joy in Affliction

Reading: Jam 1:2-8, 1 Thes 1:6

Devotional: The Thessalonians received the Gospel "in much affliction, yet with joy of the Holy Spirit." This paradox confounds worldly wisdom but defines authentic Christianity. Suffering for Christ is not suffering in vain—it serves a higher kingdom purpose. When persecution comes because of your faith, you share in Christ's sufferings and demonstrate the genuineness of your salvation. The Holy Spirit produces supernatural joy that transcends circumstances, a peace the world cannot comprehend. This joy is not denial of pain but confidence in God's sovereignty and goodness despite the pain. Reflect on current trials you face.

Can you identify ways God is using difficulty to refine your faith? Ask the Spirit to fill you with His joy today, not as an escape from reality but as evidence of a deeper reality—that you belong to an eternal kingdom where present sufferings pale in comparison to coming glory.

Day 3: Turning from Idols to the Living God Reading: 1 Jn 15:19-21, 1 Thes 1:9

Devotional: The Thessalonians made a radical turn—from serving dead idols to serving the living and true God. While we may not bow to carved images, modern idols abound: career success, financial security, relationships, comfort, or reputation. Anything that captures our ultimate allegiance besides God becomes an idol. True conversion involves both turning from and turning to—repentance and faith working together. The Thessalonians did not simply add Jesus to their collection of gods; they abandoned their former worship entirely.

Examine your heart honestly. What competes for God's rightful place? What do you turn to for comfort, identity, or security before turning to Him? The living God deserves your whole heart, not fragmented devotion. Confess any idols the Spirit reveals and recommit to serving God alone. He is not one option among many—He is the only true source of life, meaning, and satisfaction.

Day 4: The Power of Your Testimony

Reading: Rev 12:11, 1 Thes 1:7-8

Devotional: Your testimony is a powerful weapon in spiritual warfare. The Thessalonian believers became examples throughout their region—not through polished presentations but through authentic, transformed lives. Every believer has a three-part testimony: life before Christ, how you came to faith, and life now in Christ. This simple narrative carries profound power because it is irrefutably yours. No one can argue with your personal experience of God's grace. Your testimony makes the Gospel accessible, personal, and real to those watching your life. Who needs to hear your story? Perhaps a coworker struggling with purposelessness, a family member wrestling with doubt, or a neighbor facing hardship. Your testimony need not be dramatic to be effective—it simply needs to be genuine.

Reflect on your conversion and growth in Christ. Can you articulate these clearly? Practice sharing your testimony, asking God to bring opportunities to point others toward the hope you have found in Jesus.

Day 5: Living in Light of His Return

Reading: 1 Jn 2:28-29, 1 Thes 1:10

Devotional: The Thessalonians lived with urgent expectancy, "waiting for His Son from heaven." The imminent return of Christ was not abstract theology but daily motivation for holy living and bold witness. Jesus could return at any moment—this truth should revolutionize how you spend your time, treasure, and talents. If Christ returned today, would He find you faithfully serving Him or distracted by temporal pursuits? The doctrine of imminency is not meant to create anxiety but purposefulness. It clarifies priorities, intensifies devotion, and fuels evangelistic passion. We have limited time to reach the lost and glorify our King.

Consider your daily schedule and long-term plans. Are you living as though Christ might return today? What would you do differently if you knew He was coming this week? The reality is—He might be. Let this truth inspire you to abide closely in Him, pursue holiness, and invest in eternal things. Live ready, not fearful. Live expectant, not complacent. He is coming soon.

Small Group Study Guide

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

A Gospel Example for all the Ages – Part 2

Opening Prayer: Begin with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to His truth.

Opening Question: Share a time when someone's authentic faith inspired or challenged you. What made their example so impactful?

Sermon Recap:

- The Gospel comes with supernatural power through the Holy Spirit, not human eloquence or ability• God will dwell eternally with His people
- Authentic transformation produces a testimony that attracts others to Christ
- Living with expectancy of Christ's imminent return creates urgency and purposefulness in our faith
- True Christianity is supernatural, dependent entirely on the Spirit of God

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. The sermon described a young man who said he'd live for Christ only if he knew when Jesus was returning. What's the difference between "knowing about Jesus" and "knowing Jesus"?
2. Paul says the Gospel came "not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit." What does this look like practically in our lives today?
3. Read Romans 1:16 and Hebrews 4:12. How have you personally experienced the power of God's Word? Share a specific example.
4. The sermon lists manifestations of Spirit power: healing, deliverance, conversions, boldness. Why do you think many churches today seem to lack this supernatural element? What would need to change?
5. The Thessalonians received the Gospel "in much affliction" yet with "joy of the Holy Spirit." How is this paradox possible? Have you experienced joy in the midst of suffering?

6. The sermon presents the 3-part testimony model: Life before Christ, how you came to faith, life living in Christ. Take turns sharing your testimony using this framework. (Allow 3-4 minutes per person)

7. Verse 8 says their faith "sounded forth" so that Paul didn't need to say anything. Is your faith this obvious? What makes a testimony authentic and attractive versus religious and off-putting?

8. The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (v. 9). What modern-day "idols" do believers need to turn from? What competes for God's place in your life?

9. The sermon emphasized that the rapture is imminent—it could happen at any moment. How does (or should) this reality affect your daily decisions, relationships, and priorities?

10. Read 1 John 2:28. What does it mean to "abide in Christ" so we won't be ashamed when He appears? What specific behaviors or attitudes might cause shame?

11. The young man in the sermon wanted to know when Jesus was coming so he could "organize his schedule." How is this mindset different from biblical readiness? What does true readiness look like?

12. If you knew Jesus was returning next week, what would you do differently? Now the harder question: Why aren't you doing those things now?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. Spirit Power

Pray daily for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit. Ask God to do something supernatural in or through you this week.

2. Personal Testimony

Write out your 3-part testimony. Share it with at least one person this week—either a believer (for encouragement) or a non-believer (as witness).

3. Imminency of His Return

Live each day this week as if Jesus could return at any moment. Journal how this perspective changes your choices.

4. Idol Removal

Identify one "idol" competing with God in your life. Take concrete steps to remove or diminish its influence.

5. Group Prayer

As a group, commit to praying for one specific person or situation where you need to see God's power manifest. Share updates next time you meet.

Closing Prayer Points:

- For the power of the Holy Spirit to work in and through each group member
- For boldness to share authentic testimonies
- For hearts that live with expectancy of Christ's return
- For specific needs shared during discussion

Discussion Questions
1 Thessalonians 1:5-10
A Gospel Example for all the Ages – Part 2

1. How does the young man's desire to know the exact timing of Christ's return reveal the difference between knowing about Jesus and truly knowing Jesus in a personal relationship?
2. In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit's power transforming your understanding of Scripture from mere words into living and active truth in your daily life?
3. What does it mean practically to live with the expectation that Christ could return at any moment, and how would this perspective change your priorities today?
4. The Thessalonians experienced joy even in the midst of severe persecution. How can believers today cultivate this supernatural joy when facing affliction or opposition?
5. Paul emphasizes that the Gospel came not only in word but in power and the Holy Spirit. What are the dangers of reducing Christianity to intellectual knowledge without the supernatural work of the Spirit?
6. How does your personal testimony reflect the three-part model of life before Christ, coming to faith in Christ, and life in Christ, and is it accessible and authentic to those around you?
7. What idols in modern culture do believers need to turn away from in order to serve the living and true God, and how does this turning require the power of the Holy Spirit?
8. The sermon states that everything about Christianity is supernatural and dependent on the Spirit of God. How does this challenge the tendency to rely on human effort, programs, or strategies in church ministry?
9. How does understanding the distinction between the rapture and the second coming of Christ affect the urgency with which we share the Gospel and live in holiness?
10. In what ways can the church today become like the Thessalonians, serving as an example that causes the Gospel to sound forth beyond our immediate geographic region?

Dinner Conversation Starters
1 Thessalonians 1:5-10
A Gospel Example for all the Ages – Part 2

1. The Power of the Gospel in Our Own Story

How have you personally experienced the power of the Gospel—not just as information you know, but as something that has actually changed you or your choices?

2. Living By The Spirit VS. Living “Whatever Seems Good to Me”

The young man in the sermon wanted to live his own way unless he knew exactly when Jesus was coming back. In what ways are we tempted to live like that—doing what seems good to us instead of walking by the Holy Spirit every day?

3. Joy in Affliction

The Thessalonian church had ‘much affliction’ and yet still had joy. When have we seen someone go through something hard but still show real joy and faith in Jesus? What did that teach us?

4. Being an Example That “Pays it Forward”

Paul praised the Thessalonians for being an example that spread the Gospel far beyond their city. What would it look like for our family to ‘pay it forward’—to live in a way that points our neighbors, coworkers, and friends toward Jesus?

5. Living Like Jesus in Coming Back Soon

The Thessalonians lived as if Jesus could return at any time. If we really believed Jesus might come back today, what would we change about how we spend our time, money, and attention?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

A Gospel Example for all the Ages – Part 2

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Jesus's Power Helps Us Be Kind When It's Hard:** The Gospel and the Holy Spirit help us be kind even when friends are mean, leave us out, or take our toys.

Discussion Questions:

- A. How do you feel when someone doesn't let you play or be first?"
 - B. What do you think Jesus would help you do in that moment?
 - C. Can we think of one kind thing you could say or do next time, even if they're not kind to you?
2. **Following Jesus When Others Don't:** Like the Thessalonians turned from idols to the "living and true God," your child can follow Jesus even if friends don't want to.

Discussion Questions:

- A. What could you say if friends want to watch or play something that doesn't make Jesus happy?
 - B. How can we pray for courage to say, 'No thank you, let's do something else'?
 - C. If they get mad or laugh at you, how do you think Jesus feels about your choice?
3. **Living Like Jesus Might Come Back Today:** Jesus could come back at any time, so we want to use our time in ways that make Him happy.

Discussion Questions:

- A. If Jesus came back while you were playing, what would you want Him to see you doing?
- B. What's one way you could help or share today because you love Jesus?

- C. How could we remind ourselves during the day: ‘I want to live like Jesus is coming back soon’?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Being a Different Kind of Friend:** Like the Thessalonians were an example, your child can be a Christ-like example in friend groups, clubs, and teams.

Discussion Questions:

- A. What usually happens when a group starts picking on one person? How does that person probably feel?
- B. If you followed Jesus in that moment, what are two options: something you could say and something you could do?
- C. What might it cost you to do the right thing? How does remembering the ‘power of the Gospel’ help you be brave?

2. **Choosing What To Watch and Play Online:** Because the Holy Spirit lives in us, we don’t just ask, “Is this fun?” but “Does this honor Jesus?”

Discussion Questions:

- A. When you see or hear something online that doesn’t match Jesus’ heart, what do you usually do?
- B. How can you tell if a video or game is pulling your heart away from God or toward Him?
- C. What simple rule could we make as a family (for example, ‘If I’d be embarrassed for Jesus or Mom/Dad to see this, I’ll turn it off’)? How can we help each other keep it?

3. **Handling Rejection of Teasing For Our Faith:** Like the Thessalonians had “much affliction” but still had joy, your child may get teased for their faith, but God can give them peace and courage.

Discussion Questions:

- A. If a friend said, ‘You’re weird for believing in Jesus,’ how would that make you feel?

- B. What truth from the Gospel could you remember in that moment so you don't give up?
- C. How could we pray for those friends who make fun of you instead of getting angry back?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING the CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Being an Authentic Christian With Friends and On Social Media:** Like the Thessalonians' faith was "talked about everywhere," your teen's faith can be seen in how they act, speak, and post.

Discussion Questions:

- A. How do you feel when you see friends posting things that clash with what you believe?"
- B. What do you think it means to be a Christ-follower online—not perfect, but honest and different?
- C. Is there anything in your own posts, likes, or comments that you'd change if you really believed Jesus could come back today?

2. **Standing Firm When Faith is Unpopular:** Like the Thessalonians "turned from idols" and stayed faithful under pressure, your teen may face subtle or direct pushback in school, sports, or friend circles.

Discussion Questions:

- A. If your whole group wanted to do something that clearly goes against your faith, what pressures would you feel?
- B. What would it look like to say 'no' respectfully but firmly? Can we role-play a sentence or two you might actually use?
- C. How does remembering that the Holy Spirit is your power—not just your willpower—change how you see that moment?

3. **Responding to Online Conflict and Drama:** The Gospel and the Holy Spirit shape how your teen responds to conflict, insults, or exclusion in digital spaces.

Discussion Questions:

- A. What's your first impulse when someone posts something hurtful or leaves you out?
 - B. What are three options: one that reacts like everyone else might, one that hides or avoids, and one that tries to follow Jesus?
 - C. How might 'joy in affliction' look in a digital drama situation? What would it look like to both set wise boundaries and still reflect Christ?
4. **Crafting and Sharing a Simple Testimony:** Like the Thessalonians had a clear "before Christ / came to Christ / now in Christ" story, teens can form and share their own testimony in natural ways with friends.

Discussion Questions:

- A. Could you tell your story in 2–3 minutes using those three parts: before Jesus, how you met Him, and what's changed?
- B. What parts of your story might connect most with friends who struggle with anxiety, loneliness, or pressure?
- C. How can you ask the Holy Spirit to open the right moment and give you the right words, instead of forcing it or just staying silent?

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

A Gospel Example for all the Ages – Part 2

1. The Gospel is Power Not Just Content

Biblical Application: Live as if the Gospel is *power that changes you*, not just Christian information you agree with. Let the Holy Spirit shape your convictions and choices—even when that makes you stand out.

Scenario: You're in a friend group (school, college, sports, work) where everyone is okay with cheating a little (sharing test answers, lying to a teacher/boss, cutting corners on a project). They joke that “everyone does it” and think you're uptight if you don't.

Discussion Questions:

If the Gospel really is “the power of God for salvation” (Rom. 1:16), how should that affect what you do when your group normalizes cheating or dishonesty?

What's the difference between: “I'm a Christian, but I do what everyone else does,” and “I'm a Christian, and the Holy Spirit is changing how I live”?

What might you lose by doing the right thing in that situation? What might you gain—in your relationship with God and in your long-term witness?

How could you briefly explain *why* you're not okay with cheating in a way that's honest but not self-righteous?

2. Joy and Faithfulness in Affliction

Biblical Application: Expect pushback, misunderstanding, and even mockery for following Jesus—and choose joy and faithfulness instead of bitterness or compromise.

Scenario: You share something about your faith—maybe a church event, a Bible verse, or your testimony—and a friend rolls their eyes, calls you “religious,” or slowly starts backing away from the friendship. You feel the quiet social cost of following Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe what you're "losing" and what you're "gaining" in that kind of situation?

James 1:2–4 says to "count it all joy" when you face trials. How can that apply to relational rejection or quiet exclusion?

What's one practical way to guard your heart from (a) bitterness, and (b) changing your beliefs just to keep people close?

3. **Being an Example That "Pays It Forward"**

Biblical Application: See your life as a pattern and example—your speech, habits, posts, and friendships are either pointing people toward Jesus or away from Him. You're "paying forward" what Christ has done in you.

Scenario: In your group chat or on your Finsta/alt account, the vibe is gossip, dark humor, subtle bullying, and tearing people down. You don't usually start it, but you laugh, like, or react with emojis—and people see you as part of the same energy.

Discussion Questions:

If someone watched your online life for a week, would they see more "light" or more "shade"? Why?

1 Thessalonians 1:8 says the Thessalonians' faith "sounded forth." What is "sounding forth" from your account—anger, cynicism, gossip, or hope, kindness, and truth?

What would it look like to (a) stop fueling toxic content, and (b) intentionally post or share things that reflect Jesus?

Is there a chat, account, or follow you already know the Spirit is nudging you to leave or change your role in? What's your next step?

These points aim to encourage Gen Z teens and young adults to stand for Christ in all areas of their lives with Biblical principles applied to situations they might face.