

Subject: Standing Firm in Truth: Reflections on 2 Thessalonians 2:8-17

Dear Child of God,

As we reflect on this week's sermon from 2 Thessalonians 2:8-17, I wanted to share some insights that can deepen our walk with the Lord and equip us for the days ahead. For discipleship materials including devotions, studies, and much more, please go [\[HERE\]](#).

Summary: The sermon explored the reality of the coming Antichrist and the tribulation period, not to instill fear, but to ground us in hope and proper biblical understanding. Paul's words to the Thessalonians remind us that while darkness will intensify in the last days, believers are called to stand firm in God's truth. More importantly, we learned the breathtaking reality that God shares His glory with us—not because we've earned it, but because of His grace working through our abiding relationship with Christ. This understanding transforms how we live today, anchoring our identity in Him rather than the world's shifting systems.

Takeaways:

1. God will not share His glory with idols, but He graciously shares it with His children through faith, adoption as co-heirs with Christ, transformation into His image, and participation in His mission to declare His glory to all people.
2. Standing firm in Christ is not merely an academic exercise but a daily choice to conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel, to put on the full armor of God, and to hide His Word in our hearts so we might not sin against Him.
3. Our salvation and perseverance are secured not by our own strength, but by the sovereign God who has called us, is working in us, and is for us—this truth brings comfort even amid spiritual warfare and worldly pressures.

I encourage you to revisit Philippians 1:27-28 and Colossians 2:6-7 this week, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal areas where you need to stand more firmly in truth. Remember, standing firm brings freedom—freedom from pride, fear, worry, and everything that causes separation from God.

May the Lord establish your hearts and strengthen you in every good work and word.

In Christ's love and service,

Pastor Jim

2 Thessalonians 2:8-17

Bad News – GREAT News

I. Introduction: Eschatology and Prophecy Build Faith and Give Hope

II. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2: Enduring Comfort is Found in Truth

- The rapture and 2nd coming are 2 different events
- Biblical discernment is given by the Spirit and is radically different than human discernment
- There are several ways we will know when the day of the Lord has arrived.

Additional Scripture References: 1 Thes 4-5, 4:16-18; Dan 7-11; Mt 24:15-21; Rev 13, 19:11-21; 2 Thes 2:1-10; Rev 16-19; Joel 1:13-15, 2:1-2; Jer 30:7-9; Zech 13:8-9; Isa 2:10-12; Rev 7:3-8, 12; 1 Thes 4:16-18, 5:9, 5:11; Jn 14:1-3; Ro 5:9; Rev 6-19

III. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17: Encouragement to Remain Steadfast

- Consider what God's glory is AND how He shares it
- Consider how we may be overcomers in answering God's call (vs15-17)
- What is standing fast (or firm) in the Lord? How do we do this?

Additional Scripture References: Phil 2:12-13, 1:27-28, 3:20-4:1; Ps 119:11; 1 Thes 3:8; Col 1:23; Eph 6:10-20

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Bad News – GREAT News

2 Thessalonians 2:8-17

IV. Introduction: Eschatology and Prophecy Build Faith and Give Hope

1. As we come into today's passage, please be reminded that Paul is speaking into the Thessalonians fear that they may be in the day of the Lord. While Paul wants them to know that is most surely NOT true and NOT what he had taught them, it is important for us to note the importance Paul clearly placed in having a proper understanding of eschatology or end times.

In this, Paul is not simply trying to fill their heads with theology. A proper understanding of eschatology (and prophecy) deepens our faith and relationship with Christ, brings hope, and offers us concrete applications for how we are to live our lives today.

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V. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12: The Coming Lawless One

1. All the way back in Daniel 9:27, NASB, we are told of the lawless one or Antichrist that will come one day...specifically:

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"And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of ^aabominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."
- Daniel 9:27, NASB

2. Then Jesus picks up on this Daniel passage in **Matthew 24:15-23** offering yet more details, including that the Jews of that yet-future-day will flee to the wilderness when the Antichrist begins his short, brutal reign.
3. What's more, in **Daniel 7:16-25**, we read about 5 kingdoms with 4 of them known with one, (the 4th kingdom), being the one the Antichrist will rule as we read in **Revelation 13:12-17**, being not

known. Of note, there are a variety of views as to the root of this fourth kingdom with many saying it is a renewed Ottoman empire. With **Daniel 2:40-41, 9:26 and Matthew 24** in mind, I suggest a revived Roman empire better fits the biblical narrative OR perhaps, based on **Isaiah 13:19-20, Zechariah 5:5-11, and Revelation 13:12**, this 4th kingdom may be a combination of Rome and Babylon.

A. My point in all this is the bible has much to say about the “lawless one” and his coming reign of terror; a terror far greater than any before. Before we turn our attention to how the bible tells us that ‘lawless one’ will work, v9 tells us that he is Satan’s man through-and-through; a liar, stealer, destroyer, and killer! Because of this, we can know the manner and methods of Satan’s diabolically evil functioning today are what will be seen in the tribulation period, albeit with yet more intensity, frequency, and deception at work.

B. This is important in Paul’s narrative because while they are experiencing persecution, it is nothing like what will transpire in the day of the Lord. Another words, Paul is presenting them proof-positive that they are NOT in the day of the Lord. As previously noted, Scripture does reveal much of how the Antichrist will function in that day, including, but not limited to:

- i. He operates as Satan’s evil vessel with Satan’s power, including with signs & wonders, and deception. – *2 Thes 2:9*
- ii. He opposes and exalts himself above God. - *2 Thes 2:4*
- iii. He works through a “mystery of lawlessness” already at work in our day. - *2 Thes 2:7*
- iv. He speaks blasphemy. – *Rev 13:5-6*
- v. He tries to change the times and laws. – *Dan 7:11, 25*

- vi. He will make and break a covenant w/Israel. – Dan 9:27, Mrk 13:14
 - vii. He will use charisma and political cunning. – Rev 17:12-13
 - viii. He will control commerce. – Rev 13:16-17
 - ix. Like Satan does in our day against the saints and the nation of Israel. He wages war against the tribulation saints and Jews. - Rev 13:7, Dan 7:21
 - x. He rewards those submitting to them. – Dan 11:39
 - xi. He will cause many to believe a powerful delusion sent by God. – 2 Thes 2:11-12
4. From my pre-trib rapture view, I do not believe the church will be under the thumb of the Antichrist. *Yet, we are in a kingdom ruled by his boss, Satan, today.* So there remains much for us to be aware of, pray over, and apply in our walk with Christ. *These truths can also be effective in our fulfilling our glorious shared duty and responsibility of presenting the hope of the Gospel as we make disciples for God's glory.*
5. A few final thoughts regarding this section...
- A. In v10, we read it is the love of the Gospel that brings salvation while those that simply refuse the Gospel are destined to eternal separation from Christ in hell. *Along this line, the word for perish (apollymai) means to ruin, destroy, or be lost – it does NOT mean to be annihilated or to exist no more.*
 - B. V11 has proven to be a stumbling block for some. *'What kind of God would cause people to believe a lie' is how some try to interpret this, and other similar verses.* Instead, this should be understood as God giving them what they want in their refusal to love and accept the truth of the Gospel. *That is, he sent them*

a whopper or delusion (*'planē* '...meaning error or deceit) that aligned with their heart and so they chased what they wanted.

- i. Paul gives an extended treatment of this very thing in **Romans 1** with both that passage and our passage today offering insights about God also bringing us a great warning. You see, God is willing to cede the ground of our unrighteous thoughts...but not the entailing consequences that are baked into our choices. In a very real sense, those rejecting Jesus have condemned themselves to eternal life separated from Him.

6. Next, we turn from the darkness of the days of the Antichrist with a great encouragement for all believers, including, especially, tribulation saints.

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VI. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17: Encouragement to Remain Steadfast

1. Don't be so busy or so wrapped up in the doing and pressure of this life that you are not thankfully praising God and experiencing His love washing over you day-after-day, year-after-year.
2. Yes, the Antichrist will come. But Christian be encouraged to stand fast in His word (TRUTH) because the sovereign God has called, is working in you, and is for you. Yes, the Antichrist has great power. But Christian be encouraged to stand fast in His word (TRUTH) because the sovereign God has called, is working in you, and is for you. Yes, Satan has been hard at work in every generation. But Christian be encouraged to stand fast in His word (TRUTH) because the sovereign God has called, is working in you, and is for you.
3. Let's take a few moments to consider a small sampling of Paul's breathtaking words of Jesus sharing His glory with us.

First, we look to what Scripture reveals is His glory:

- A. Scripture teaches that God's glory is the outward display of God's perfect character. (Exod 33:18-19 and 34:6);
- B. His glory contains intrinsic majesty, holiness, and value (Ps 29:1-2);
- C. We know all of Creation, including men and women, with their very existence declare the glory of God. (Gen 1:27; Ps 19; Rom 11:36, 16:27);
- D. We also know that while most fully seen in Jesus Christ, His glory fills the whole earth as a visible manifestation in which we may experience and testify of His character and attributes through our transformed lives (Exodus 40:34, 2 Chronicles 5:14; Jn 1:14, 2 Cor 4:4-6; Is 6:3);
- E. Finally, while God will NOT share His glory with idols, as we read in our passage today, He will share His glory with His disciples. As we consider some of the many ways God offers for us to share in His glory, please note they share one common foundation...they are the result of our being in an abiding relationship with Him. There is NO other way.

Next we consider the ways God shares His glory:

- A. We receive His glory through both the faith he gives us and the hope that comes with our faith (Col 1:27);
- B. He adopts us as heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. This means our identity is in God, that we have the great privilege of carrying forward the family name and mission, that we share in the great standing and authority of the Father, and that our future is secured by the Father's position. (Rom 8:15-17);
- C. Closely attached to being heirs and co-heirs, we share in God's glory as we share in His suffering for the sake of the gospel. (Rom 8:17-18, Phil 3:10-11);

D. We share in His glory as we are transformed in to His image.

This means we are becoming more loving, holy, humble, obedient, sacrificial, forgiving, compassionate, and others-centered as His character and will become our character and will. (2 Cor 3:18);

E. The spiritual fruit (read Gal 5:22-23 as a start)...joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, self-control bearing out in our lives is a visible representation of God sharing His glory with us. (Gal 5:22-23; Jn 15:8);

F. As we seek to glorify God (rather than man), He shares His glory with us (Jn 5:44); and, finally

G. I noted earlier that God shares His glory as we share in the family mission of testifying of Him in declaring His glory to all people. (Mt 28:18-20; 1 Chron 16:23-24; Ps 96:3)

4. Folks, this is NOT an academic exercise, but is to be seen through the lens of each of us working out our salvation in fear and trembling as stated in **Phil 2:12-13**. Who do you say God is? Is your identity actually-and-fully in Him or is it remaining anchored to your pride and the worldly system in which we live?

A. As straight forward as these questions are, for many of us the answer is NOT so easily arrived at. Oh, many of us will say we want Jesus, but it can be a very real struggle to do what is right. What's more, some will say we want Jesus even while feeling condemned in our failure to abide in Christ and give up. And there are a host of other competing ways our walk with Jesus can be resisted and even derailed.

VII. In verses 2:15-17, Paul offers additional everyday insights as to how one is an overcomer in answering God's call. The cliff-notes version is that by His grace and through faithful obedience, we answer His call by standing fast in Christ and His word.

Thankfully, Paul's frequent refrain of 'standing fast' offers many practical lessons regarding why and how we are to do so.

1. First, in Philippians 1:27, **NASB**, we read:

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Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸ in no way alarmed by *your* opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that *too*, from God. - Php 1:27–28, NASB

2. We stand firm because of the hope he gives us as noted in Philippians 3:20-4:1:

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²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

4 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. - Php 3:20–4:1

3. Some other great spiritual truths regarding standing firm include:
 - A. Standing fast or firm is equated with “really living” in **1 Thes 3:8** and living in the hope of the gospel in **Col 1:23**;
 - B. Standing firm means our strapping on the armor of God allows us to stand firm in the midst of evil's persecution and spiritual attacks. (Eph 6:13-14);
 - C. Standing fast or firm comes when we are rooted and continually built up in Christ (heart & mind along with character & conduct) in His strength and with overflowing thankfulness (Col 2:6-7);

D. Standing fast in our faith means we are on guard against the ways of the world and enemy as we live lives marked by courage and Godly strength. (1 Cor 16:13)

E. By standing fast, we experience freedom. (Jn 8:31-32; Gal 5:1). Freedom from pride, from falling away, fear, worry, and from all things causing us separation from God. In Psalm 119:11, the Psalmist offers a beautiful picture of standing firm with the words: "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you". So, let us purpose and pursue knowing God's word...not just in our heads, but also in our hearts.

4. These Scriptures are but a taste of how we may understand and live out standing fast in the person of Jesus and His word! **For, He (and His truth) is the living water with unending depth.** He (and His truth) is the bread of life seeing us through the tests of this life as overcomers in that we labor NOT in vain, but for the glory of God...**a glory which, as we read Paul giving thanks for in vs13-14, Jesus shares with those that love, confess, and give their lives to Him.**
5. As we close today, it seems clear that Paul understood that standing firm was a great AND possible ideal, **but only through our having a saving and abiding relationship with One who loves and brings us great comfort as He establishes us in standing fast.**

Folks, this is the gospel of grace in a nutshell. **The gospel beckons and empowers us, in the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit, to receive and walk with Christ...**what remains is what you will do with His invitation?!

A. For those wanting to receive Christ in your heart as Messiah, I invite you to pray this prayer inviting Him to be Lord of your life...[PRAY]

B. For those wanting to stand fast, join me in this prayer drawn from **Ephesians 6:10-20**:

Lord God,

I come to you needing strength that is not my own — the strength of your might. I take up the full armor you have provided: truth to guard my heart from every lie, righteousness to cover my chest, the gospel of peace beneath my feet, faith to quench every fiery dart of the enemy, salvation as a helmet over my mind, and your Word as the sword in my hand.

I choose to stand. Not in my own resolve, but in you.

Keep me alert and persevering. Let me not grow weary in the evil day. And even when I have done everything — let me still be standing.

For the battle is yours, the armor is yours, and the victory is already yours.

In the name of Jesus Christ, who has already disarmed every power and authority — Amen.

5-Day Devotional

2 Thessalonians 2:8-17

Bad News-GREAT News

Day 1: The Coming Storm and Our Present Hope

Reading: Dan 9:24-27; Mt 24:15-23

Devotional: The prophetic warnings about future tribulation remind us that darkness has an appointed end. While the Antichrist will one day bring unprecedented deception, understanding this truth deepens rather than diminishes our faith today. We are not called to live in fear of tomorrow's evil, but in the confidence of Christ's ultimate victory. The same God who has revealed the end from the beginning walks with you through today's trials. Your current struggles, though real, are not the final chapter.

Take courage: if God has numbered the days of evil's reign, He certainly knows the number of your tears. Stand firm in this hope—the story ends with Jesus victorious and you sharing in His triumph.

Day 2: Recognizing the Enemy's Methods Reading: 2 Thes 2:7-12; Eph 6:10-13

Devotional: Satan's playbook hasn't changed—deception, accusation, and counterfeit power remain his primary weapons. The "mystery of lawlessness" already at work seeks to blur truth, normalize compromise, and make evil appear reasonable. Yet awareness is half the battle. When you recognize the enemy's tactics—the subtle lies about your identity, the temptation to trust feelings over Scripture, the pressure to conform to cultural Christianity—you can stand against them. God hasn't left you defenseless. His armor protects every vulnerable area: truth guards your heart, righteousness covers your conscience, and faith extinguishes doubt's flames.

Today, identify one area where deception has gained ground in your thinking. Counter it with specific Scripture, and watch the darkness flee.

Day 3: Loved, Called, and Chosen

Reading: 2 Thes 2:13-14; Ro 8:28-30

Devotional: Pause and let this truth wash over you: God loves you, has called you, and is sanctifying you by His Spirit. This isn't based on your performance but on His sovereign choice and grace. Before the foundation of the world, He set His affection on you. Through the gospel, He called you out of darkness. By His Spirit, He is conforming you to Christ's image. And one day, you will obtain the glory of Jesus Himself. This is not wishful thinking—it's God's unchangeable purpose.

When discouragement whispers that you're failing or falling behind, remember: the One who began this good work in you will complete it. Your transformation isn't your project; it's His promise. Rest in His love today, and let gratitude replace anxiety.

Day 4: Sharing in His Glory

Reading: Ro 8:15-18; 2 Cor 3:18; Jn 15:1-8

Devotional: God refuses to share His glory with idols, yet He freely shares it with His children. This stunning reality should reshape how you view your identity and purpose. As His adopted heir, you carry the family name and mission. As you abide in Christ, His character gradually becomes yours—His love, humility, and holiness bearing fruit in your life. Even your suffering for the gospel becomes a participation in His glory. This isn't about earning status; it's about intimate union with Jesus that naturally produces transformation.

Where are you seeing spiritual fruit emerge? Thank God for those evidences of His glory in you. Where do you still struggle? Invite Him deeper into those areas, trusting that abiding—not striving—produces lasting change.

Day 5: Standing Firm in Truth

Reading: Phil 4:1; Col 2:6-7; Ps 119:9-16

Devotional: "Stand firm" appears throughout Paul's letters—not as a burdensome command but as an empowering call. You stand firm not through white-knuckled determination but by being rooted in Christ and His Word. Like a tree with deep roots withstands the storm, you weather life's trials by drawing daily nourishment from Scripture. Hiding God's Word in your heart isn't merely memorization; it's allowing truth to shape your reflexes, inform your decisions, and anchor your identity. When temptation comes, the Word surfaces. When fear threatens, promises emerge. When confusion reigns, clarity breaks through.

Today, choose one verse from this week's readings to memorize and meditate on. Let it take root deeply. Standing firm begins with what you plant in your heart today.

Small Group Study Guide

2 Thessalonians 2:8-17

Bad News-GREAT News

Opening Prayer: Begin by inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to receive what God wants to teach through this passage.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. Proper eschatology matters because it deepens our faith, brings hope, and guides how we live today
2. Evil is real and active, but believers are NOT destined for the wrath of the tribulation period
3. God shares His glory with us through adoption, transformation, suffering for the gospel, and bearing fruit
4. Standing firm requires intentionality: knowing God's Word, wearing spiritual armor, and living in Christian community
5. Our identity must be anchored in Christ, not in the world's system or our own pride
6. God provides comfort and strength to establish us in standing firm—we don't do this in our own power

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

1. What surprised you most about the biblical description of the Antichrist and his methods?
2. Paul says the "mystery of lawlessness" is already at work today (2 Thess 2:7). What evidence do you see of this in our current culture?
3. The sermon lists ways the Antichrist will operate—through deception, signs and wonders, control of commerce, breaking covenants, etc. How does Satan use similar tactics today to oppose God's people?

4. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. Why is it significant that people perish not just because of unbelief, but because they "refused to love the truth"? What's the difference?
5. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. Paul says God has called us to "obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." What does it mean that God shares His glory with us? How does this truth impact your daily life?
6. The sermon lists several ways we share in God's glory: Through faith and hope, As heirs and co-heirs with Christ Through sharing in His suffering, By being transformed into His image, Through bearing spiritual fruit. Which of these resonates most with you right now? Which feels most challenging?
7. Paul repeatedly emphasizes "standing firm" in our faith. What are the biggest threats to your ability to stand firm in Christ today? (Examples: busyness, fear, cultural pressure, discouragement, etc.)
8. The sermon mentions Psalm 119:11: "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Practically speaking, what does it look like to hide God's word in your heart, not just your head?
9. The sermon asks: "Is your identity actually and fully in Him or is it remaining anchored to your pride and the worldly system?" How would you honestly answer that question today?
10. Paul says we stand firm "in one spirit, with one mind striving together" (Phil 1:27). How can this small group help you stand firm in your faith? What do you need from this community?

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

1. Memorize one "standing firm" verse from the sermon (Phil 4:1, 1 Cor 16:13, Gal 5:1, etc.) and meditate on it daily
2. Conduct a "spiritual armor inventory": Each day this week, prayerfully assess which piece of armor you need most and ask God to strengthen you in that area
3. Create a "glory list": Write down specific ways you've seen God share His glory with you (transforming your character, giving you faith, using you to serve others, etc.). Thank Him for each one

4. Fast from one worldly influence that competes for your identity (social media, news consumption, entertainment, etc.) and replace that time with Scripture reading
5. Share your testimony: Tell someone this week about how God has called you and is transforming you—declare His glory to others
6. Pray the Ephesians 6 prayer from the sermon's conclusion every morning this week

Closing Prayer Points:

- Thank God for calling us to share in His glory
- Ask for strength to stand firm in an increasingly hostile world
- Pray for those who don't yet know Christ—that they would love the truth of the gospel
- Commit to putting on the full armor of God daily
- Pray for specific needs shared during discussion

Discussion Questions

2 Thessalonians 2:8-17

Bad News-GREAT News

1. How does a proper understanding of end times theology deepen your current faith and relationship with Christ, rather than simply filling your head with abstract knowledge?
2. In what ways do you see the 'mystery of lawlessness' already at work in our world today, and how does recognizing this help you stand firm in truth?
3. What does it mean that God gives people over to the delusions they desire when they reject the Gospel, and how does this reflect both His justice and human responsibility?
4. How can believers balance being aware of spiritual warfare and Satan's schemes without becoming fearful or obsessed with the darkness?
5. What does it mean practically for you to share in Christ's glory, and how does this truth transform your identity and daily purpose?
6. In what areas of your life is your identity still anchored to pride or worldly systems rather than being fully rooted in Christ?
7. How does the truth that we share in God's glory through suffering for the Gospel change your perspective on current trials or persecution?
8. What specific practices help you hide God's Word in your heart rather than just accumulating head knowledge, and how has this protected you from sin?
9. What does it look like for you to 'stand firm' in your specific circumstances right now, and what competing pressures threaten to derail your faithfulness?
10. How does the hope of Christ's return and our future glorification with Him affect the way you conduct yourself today in your relationships, work, and witness?

Dinner Conversation Starters

2 Thessalonians 2:8-17

Bad News-GREAT News

1. Talking About the “Big Picture” of History

Paul wanted the Thessalonians to understand the end times so they wouldn't live in fear. Why do you think God tells us about future events instead of keeping everything a mystery? Does knowing God is in control of history change how you face hard things today? How?

2. Deception and Truth in Our World

The sermon talked about the “lawless one” using deception and how many will believe a lie. Where do you see deception in our culture today (media, social media, school, politics, etc.)? How can our family stay rooted in God's truth so we are not easily fooled?

3. Standing Firm in Faith

We heard that believers are called to “stand firm” in Christ and His word. What does “standing firm” in Jesus look like in your everyday life (school, work, friendships)? Can you share a time when it was hard to stand firm, but you knew what God wanted you to do?

4. Sharing in God's Glory

The sermon said God doesn't share His glory with idols, but He does share it with His children. What does it mean to you that God wants to share His glory with us? In what ways have you seen God changing your character to look more like Jesus? (More patient, loving, forgiving, etc.)

5. Our Family's Mission

We heard that part of sharing in God's glory is sharing in His mission—making Him known. How can our family, together, help declare God's glory to others (neighbors, friends, coworkers, classmates)? Is there one practical thing we could start doing this week (praying for someone, inviting someone over, serving together)?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

2 Thessalonians 2:8-17

Bad News-GREAT News

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Learning to Spot “Truth” and “Tricks”**: Teach that just like there is a “lawless one” who lies, today we also have an enemy who uses tricks. But Jesus is always truth.

Discussion Questions:

- a. When someone tells you something that sounds strange or scary, what can you do?
 - b. Who are safe people you can ask if something is true (parents, teacher, etc.)?
 - c. How is Jesus like a light that helps you see what’s true?
2. **Standing Firm by Remembering Bible Verses**: Standing firm means we remember what God says and trust Him even when we feel afraid or left out.

Discussion Questions:

- a. When was a time you felt scared or left out with friends?
 - b. How could you talk to Jesus in that moment?
 - c. What Bible verse could you say to help your heart feel strong?
3. **Choosing Kindness When Others Are Mean**: Satan uses hurt and mean words to break people down. Jesus shares His glory by helping us be loving and kind.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Has anyone said something unkind to you at school or online (if applicable)? How did it make you feel?
- b. What do you think Jesus would want you to do or say next time?
- c. How can we show God’s love even when others are not kind?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Testing Messages: “Is This From God or Not?”**: Help them understand that not everything they hear from friends, YouTube, games, or TV is true or good. The Antichrist uses deception in the future; the enemy uses lies now.

Discussion Questions:

- a. “Can you think of something you saw online, in a video, or heard at school that didn’t seem to match what God says?”
- b. What kinds of things are your friends watching or sharing that you’re not sure about?

- c. How could we use our “truth test” next time you see something questionable?
2. **Standing Firm in Friend Groups**: Standing firm means not changing what you know is right just so friends will like you.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Has there been a time when your friends were doing something you knew wasn't right? What did you do?
- b. Which is harder for you: saying something, or walking away? Why?
- c. How could we pray for courage for you to stand firm in your friend group?
3. **Using Devices to Show God's Glory, Not Ours**: The sermon talked about God sharing His glory with His children, not idols. Social media, games, and screens can become “idols” if they shape our identity more than God does.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What do your favorite apps or games make you want—more stuff, more likes, more attention, or more of God?
- b. When you post or send messages (if applicable), what would it look like to do that in a way that honors Jesus?
- c. Is there anything online right now that you think God might want you to stop watching, following, or posting?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Identity: “Who Am I Really Following?”**: Paul contrasts those who love the truth with those who believe lies. Teens are forming identity—friends, trends, and digital culture all compete for that place.

Discussion Questions:

- a. If you're honest, where do you feel the strongest pressure to get approval—friends, social media, grades, sports?
- b. How does that pressure affect the choices you make online and with friends?
- c. What would change if you lived like your main identity is “child of God, co-heir with Christ”?
2. **Discernment in Digital Spaces**: The “mystery of lawlessness” is already at work. Online culture often normalizes sin, mocks God, or blurs truth. Standing firm means discerning without being paranoid or self-righteous.

Discussion Questions:

- a. “What's something online that lots of people your age think is normal, but you're not sure lines up with God's truth?”

- b. Do you ever feel like you have to hide what you're doing online from us or from God? Why?
 - c. How can we, as a family, create a digital environment where you feel safe to be honest?
- 3. Standing Firm in Relationships (Dating, Friends, Drama): Standing firm includes resisting peer pressure in relationships and social drama, even when it costs popularity.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Where do you feel the strongest pull to compromise what you believe right now—friends, dating, online conversations?
- b. What boundaries do you think God would want you to set in friendships or dating relationships?
- c. How can we support you without spying on you—what kind of help or accountability would actually feel loving?

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

2 Thessalonians 2:8-17

Bad News-GREAT News

1. Loving the Truth in a World of “My Truth”

Bible Reference: 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12; John 14:6

Application: Instead of chasing “my truth” or popular opinions, choose to love God’s truth—even when it’s inconvenient, uncool, or costs you socially.

Scenario: You’re in a group chat where everyone is hyping a belief or lifestyle that clearly goes against Scripture (mocking purity, making light of sin, calling all religions “the same,” etc.). If you stay silent, you feel fake. If you speak up, you might get labeled judgmental or close-minded.

Discussion: When have you felt pressure to agree with something you knew didn’t align with Scripture—either in a group or online? What would it look like to “love the truth” in that moment without being arrogant or harsh?

2. Standing Firm Instead of Bending In

Bible Reference: 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Ephesians 6:13–14

Application: “Standing firm” means you don’t change your convictions every time the group changes—but you stay rooted in Jesus and His Word, even when it makes you stand out.

Scenario: Your friend group starts making fun of a classmate, a teacher, or someone’s faith. Everyone is laughing. You know it’s wrong but you also don’t want to be the “weird Christian” who ruins the mood.

Discussion: What are some practical, low-drama ways you could “stand firm” in a moment like that (what you say, what you don’t say, or how you act)? Which one would be hardest for you and why?

3. Discernment in Digital Spaces

Bible Reference: 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10; Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8

Application: Because deception is already at work, practice discernment with what you watch, scroll, like, and share. Not everything funny, aesthetic, or viral is spiritually safe.

Scenario: An influencer you love is hilarious and relatable, but increasingly mocks Christian beliefs, normalizes what God calls sin, or promotes ideas that chip away at your faith. Unfollowing feels extreme; staying feels compromising.

Discussion: How can you tell when content is starting to shape your thinking away from Christ, even if it's "just entertainment"? What's one boundary you could set for yourself with influencers, shows, or accounts?

4. Identity: Co-Heir with Christ vs. Curated Persona

Bible Reference: 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14; Romans 8:15–17; Colossians 1:27

Application: Let your core identity be "child of God, co-heir with Christ," not your follower count, body image, achievements, or relationship status.

Scenario: You post something and it gets barely any engagement, while someone else's similar content blows up. Or your friends seem to get more attention, more DMs, more compliments. You start feeling less valuable and more insecure.

Discussion: When you feel "less than" because of numbers, attention, or comparison, what truths from these verses can you preach to yourself to reset your identity? Be specific.

These points aim to empower Gen Z to live out their faith genuinely and courageously in various aspects of their daily lives, reflecting Biblical integrity, compassion, and steadfastness.