

Subject: Living as Victors: Key Insights from This Week's Message

Dear Church Family,

This past Sunday's sermon in 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 addressed something that can truly transform our daily Christian experience: what it means to live as victors in Christ. For discipleship materials including devotions, studies, and much more, please go [\[HERE\]](#).

Summary: The sermon explored the biblical model of Christian victory through three interconnected constructs: understanding who God is, grasping who God says we are, and living out godliness in our everyday lives. More importantly, we examined the foundational role that prayer plays in accessing this victory—not as just another task on our spiritual checklist, but as something even more essential than our next breath. The message challenged us to recognize that true victory is not found in our own strength, wisdom, or effort, but in God's faithfulness to establish and guard us as we surrender to His transforming work.

Takeaways:

1. Prayer is where the action is: God's Word has the power to create, sustain, sanctify, cleanse, and heal. When we pray for the Gospel to spread swiftly and glorify Christ, we're tapping into divine power that far exceeds anything we could accomplish on our own. Consider what might be hindering the Gospel's swift work in your life—busyness, fear, prayerlessness, or the cares of this world.
2. You are on the winning team: God is faithful to establish your faith and guard you from the enemy. Your victory doesn't depend on your performance but on Christ's finished work. The question isn't whether God can keep His promises, but whether you believe He is who He says He is and trust Him more than the comforts or worries of this world.
3. Growing in godliness is God's work, not yours: Here's the liberating truth—you don't have what it takes in yourself to grow in godliness, and that's actually good news. Godliness is a gift from God Himself, accessed through surrender and submission rather than human effort. As God directs your heart into His love and patience, you'll find yourself increasingly responding like Christ in the trenches of everyday life.

I encourage you to reflect this week on how you're doing in the patience of Christ. How are your interactions with others reflecting His long-suffering, forgiveness, grace, kindness, and compassion? If you recognize areas for growth, remember that God freely gives all you need to walk in victory. Don't hesitate to reach out to me or our

ministry team if you want to talk more about investing in prayer or growing in your relationship with Christ.

May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and the patience of Christ.

In His Service,

Pastor Jim

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Living as Victors

I. Introduction: A Biblical Model of Christian Victory

- Who is God? Who does He say I am? Living Godliness.

II. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2: Prayer is Where the Action Is!

- The power of prayer is.... _____

- The hindrances of prayer include: _____

- The Word of God reveals the glory of God

III. 2 Thessalonians 3:3-4: Christian, You Are On The Winning Team

- Does your life reflect the joy of the Lord?
- True freedom rejects the lies of the world and lives in the truth that “I am free because I am Gods.”

Additional Scripture References: Jude 1:24

IV. 2 Thessalonians 3:5: Living Life With Godly Love & Patience

- God’s love is... _____

- Some areas we can invest toward growing in godliness include: _____

V. Closing: A Picture of Victory

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Living as Victors

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

VI. Introduction: A Biblical Model of Christian Victory

1. If embraced, today's message changes everything. That said, I don't want you to think that the ground we cover today speaks all there is to know about Christian victory...no, Christian victory is ultimately found in the infinity of God and can therefore never be fully plumbed. Yet, God give us all we need to live victoriously **AND** to continually mature in our personal relationship with Him and His beautiful bride, the church.
2. Let's consider our faith in light of a biblical model of Christian victory with three distinct, yet deeply interrelated discipleship constructs. They include (a) Who is God, (b) Who does God say I am (and WE are), and (c) Living Godliness.

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3. These three constructs are very much in view today as is one of the prime, if not THE prime, manner in which we “achieve” this victory. Before we get to them, Paul starts us out with something that, for the Christian, is as vital as the next breath we take.

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VII. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2: Prayer is Where the Action Is!

1. Here Paul goes where Paul seemingly always goes...to prayer. Specifically, we can point to at least 4 categories of things he prays for...

2. **First**, he prays for God's word to be shared. Scripture has much to say about the power of God's word that I hope will build our prayer-life into bonfires. The power of prayer...

- A. is the power to create all things (Heb 11:3)
- B. is living and active (Heb 4:12)
- C. is the power to life, including through new birth (Jn 6:63, 1 Peter 1:23)
- D. is the power to sanctify (Jn 17:17, Eph 5:26)
- E. is the power to light the righteous path of life (Ps 119:105)
- F. is the power to cleanse and purify (Jn 15:3, Eph 5:26)
- G. is the power to uphold or sustain all things (Heb 1:3)
- H. is the weapon of spiritual warfare (Eph 6;17; Mt 4:4, 7, 10)
- I. is the power to keep us from sin (Ps 119:11)
- J. is the power to heal (Ps 107:20)
- K. is the mind of Christ made available to us, His followers (Jn 1:1, 14)

In considering all of these in light of our world today, do you think we need less of God's power and less prayer than the 1st century church Paul was exhorting in Thessalonica? I don't!

3. **Second**, Paul prays that the word will go out swiftly. That is, there is a sense of urgency and purposefulness to share the Gospel. Consider if any of the following short-list of the many hindrances to the gospel going out swiftly are evident in your life:

- A. Unreasonable and wicked people (2 Thes 3:2);
- B. Because of faithlessness (2 Thes 3:2);
- C. The God of this age blinds the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4);
- D. The cares (including the busyness, love of money, comforts, addictions, fears, worries, apathy) of this world choke out the word (Mark 4:19, Lk 8:14, 21:34; 1 Tim 1:7-8);
- E. Prayerlessness (Col 4:3; Mt 9:37-38);
- F. Fear (2 Tim 1:7-8);
- G. Divisiveness and strife in the church (Ro 16:17; 1 Cor 3:4);
- H. Ungodliness (Ro 2:23-24);
- I. Lack of Biblical love (Jn 13:35);

J. Unwillingness to labor for God (Ro 10:14-15); and
K. Shame of the gospel (Rom 1:16; 2 Tim 1:7-8)

4. **Third**, Paul prays that the word of the Lord may glorify Jesus. The word for glorified here means to praise, honor, esteem, and clothe in splendor. Because the word of God reveals Christ...in all of His power, character, will, purposes, faithfulness, and love...it reveals His glory through our right response of loving (Him and others), trusting, obeying, serving, suffering, fearing, and sharing Him as we bear Godly fruit in our lives (Jn 15:8) in becoming more and more like Him (Rom 8:29).
5. Finally, a theme that we touched upon earlier in talking about the hindrances to the gospel going swiftly, is expanded upon through Paul's specific prayer for discernment and protection from the unbeliever and that which wars against our faith. Perhaps some or maybe most of us, are encouraged with God's faithfulness in this area. Among the many things we may cling to is that (1) He is our refuge and stronghold (Ps 9:9) and (2) He is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed (Ps 34:18-19).
6. As on-point as Paul's prayers are for the church in that day and today, I want to encourage us to further consider the pattern of prayer in Scripture. It is a pattern that speaks of prayer in our quiet time with the Lord and, corporately, as a part of God's vibrant, living church. It is a pattern that speaks of investment in the kingdom of heaven for the glory of God. It is a pattern that speaks of our growing humility and obedience as we submit to His will and plan, rather than our own.

It is NOT simply one more thing to do in our Christian walk...it is, frankly, and please forgive me for my earlier mistake when I said 'prayer is as vital as our next breath' as that is actually NOT true. In fact, prayer is more essential than our next breath for it is through individual AND (not or) corporate prayer that we come into the fullness of relationship with our heavenly Father.

I want to invite you to join me in investing in prayer as a right-response to Jesus' leadership in our lives...if you don't know how, ask me, one of our ministry team members, or the Connect Team.

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VIII. 2 Thessalonians 3:3-4: Christian, You Are On The Winning Team

1. According to Paul, the All-Powerful, All-Knowing, always present, holy, and righteous God IS faithful...faithful to (a) establish or make firm their faith and (b) to guard them from the enemy. These He does that we may bring him glory in being free (Jn 8:32, 36; Gal 5:1) and be filled with peace (Is 26:3) in having hearts of holiness (1 Thes 3:13). Jude 1:24 says it this way:

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Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
- Jude 1:24

A. Is your life marked by the joy of the Lord? Do you believe the One that started the good work in you will complete it as promised in **Philippians 1:6**? Or do the comforts and worries of this life consume much of your time and treasure? Are the binding chords of anger, fear, addictions, or other sin so tight as to crowd out the hope and promise of the Gospel?

- i. These are not rhetorical questions. Even recently, there have been a host of financial, physical, and spiritual challenges and these same questions have confronted me. Do I believe that God is who He says and do I want what He offers? Or will I try to take things on in my strength and wisdom – which I know hasn't worked out the way I hoped. The choice is real, just as are the consequences of our choices.
- ii. One other thing of note, as we go deeper in relationship with God, we will find the captivating things of the world holding our interest with less-and-less passion. Instead, we come to appreciate the peace and contentment that comes with godliness. We come to rejoice in loving and

serving Him and others. **We come to value forgiveness and compassion.**

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Obedience is no longer an impossible weight to carry, but a great privilege and responsibility offering meaning and purpose. **Freedom is no longer the lie that “I answer to no one or no thing”,** but we have received the truth that true freedom, eternal freedom, is because I am God’s and am not of this world!

- iii. This is what the victorious sanctified saint looks like...**someone continuously maturing as they take on the mind and character of Christ as their own.** This is a very picture of the transforming love of Christ at work.

- 2. Before we move onto the final verse, I want to take a moment and note that Paul’s confidence was in the Lord and not in the Thessalonians. **This principle applies to us as well...**no matter the promises of the enemy nor the lusts of our hearts, **no matter how hard we work or how smart we are or how much money we earn,** real victory is available only through our faithful and loving Lord.

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IX. 2 Thessalonians 3:5: Living Life with Godly Love & Patience

- 1. The first thing we note in this final verse is a miracle...do you see it. **We don’t come into God’s love and patience of our own volition.** It’s a God-thing. **The author and finisher of our faith directs us.** After pursuing us, He overcomes all of our objections, self-righteousness, and selfishness in drawing us to Him.
- 2. God’s love is a transforming love that is part of the essence of God’s self-giving nature. **His love brings meaning and purpose into the lives of those He loves.**

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- A. So ancient is god’s love that it has no beginning.
- B. **So powerful is God’s love that it brings life from death.**
- C. So unconditional is God’s love that it pursued us while we were still His enemies.

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- D. So vast is God's love that its boundaries can never be reached.
- E. So sacrificial is God's love that it spared nothing – even the life of His Son.
- F. So personal is God's love that he knows you by name.

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- G. So patient and longsuffering is God's love that it endures our fits and failures.
- H. So humbling is God's love that the King of kings stooped to wash man's feet.

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- I. So soul satisfying is God's love that nothing else in creation can fill the God-shaped hole in our hearts.
- J. So secure is God's love that our salvation is sure.
- K. So generous is God's love that He calls us sons and daughters.

And even with all that we do know and experience regarding His love, we also come to see the depth and beauty of His love remains incomprehensible. This is the God that Paul was asking to direct the Thessalonian hearts and every other Christ-followers heart, including yours and mine.

3. Depending on your bible translation, you may have a word like endurance, steadfastness, or perseverance in place of 'patience' as we read in the NKJV. Consider the Ancient of Days sending prophets, judges, kings, angels, miracles, events, and, ultimately, His own Son to get our attention. If you have spent any time in the New Testament reading about Jesus relationship with His disciples, the gentiles, the Jewish religious leaders, and the Jews themselves, you witnessed the patience of Christ.

A. In His patience, He (a) suffered long and was betrayed, (b) forgave, (c) poured out His grace and mercy, (d) was kind, gentle, compassionate, and caring, (e) He proclaimed the truth, and He (f) delayed justice and judgment as He poured Himself out for the lost to find their way home.

B. To be 'in the patience of Christ' indicates a grasping or understanding-and-valuing of who He is, His will for us, and His character. To be patient in Christ is nothing short of a revolution, first in receiving salvation and then, in His making us

more like Him via our daily living experience. It's in the trenches of our everyday lives that the child of God increasingly responds to the direction of the Spirit of God instead of our own flesh.

More specifically, in entering into the patience of Christ, the Lord “directs” us to also be long-suffering, forgiving, grace-filled, and merciful...in His patience, we will be kind, gentle, compassionate, and caring...in His patience, we will proclaim and live out the truth as we pour ourselves out to the lost for His glory.

- C. Just for a moment, consider your interactions with others in the last month, week, or even day...how are you doing being in the patience of Christ? I do not ask to put salt on the wound of a broken relationship or to call attention to our failures per se, but to call us all to Christ's standard; that we may be satisfied with nothing less than pleasing Him in purposing to be like Him just as Paul is calling God's church in Thessalonica.

If you, like me, conclude that you have some more growing in godliness to do, we are led to ask ‘how?’.

- i. So, I have some really hard news for many, maybe most, of us hearing my voice. In ourselves, we simply don't have what it takes to grow in godliness. Godliness is NOT a work of human physical or mental prowess. While we have our contributions of surrender, obedience, and love, Godliness is a gift from God Himself.
- ii. Growing in godliness means we are NOT blown to-and-fro by the doctrine of men, but to be set free by the truth of God (Ephesians 4:14). Growing in godliness means our victory is found in the new heart and transformed mind offered by God. Growing in godliness is found in our surrender and submission as we receive and live out the faith God Himself gives us. In short, growing in godliness is far more about God than it is about us.

- iii. That our growing in godliness is a work of God does not make it any less meaningful and transformational to us...just more accessible, since we rely upon Him and not our failed selves. What's more, God offers us the opportunity to both receive Him and invest in His work of growing our godliness...all under the direction of the Lord and the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

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Some starting points of personal investment include (a) the spiritual disciplines, (b) the beatitudes, (c) the fruit of the Spirit, and (d) the “put-on’s” and “put-off’s” peppered throughout the bible. My point is not that there is a checklist for us to follow, but that God is faithful to give all that we need to walk in victory.

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X. Closing: A Picture of Victory

1. In an effort to dispel the myths, the mysteriousness, lies of the enemy, and destructive effects of our own self-righteous pride that we may all live in the victory only Christ offers, I want to return to our discipleship journey picture as we close today.
 - A. Knowing and walking with God is NOT complicated. God willingly and freely reveals Himself and how we are to relate to Him;
 - B. Likewise, because there is a standard of righteousness, goodness, and holiness, knowing who we are both in and outside of God is also not complicated; and
 - C. Finally, if we are willing, God will show and empower us to know and live out our God-given meaning, purpose, and value as we please and bring Him glory in continually growing in godliness.

5-Day Devotional

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Living as Victors

Day 1: The Power of God's Word

Reading: Heb 4:12; Psa 119:105

Devotional: God's Word is not merely ink on paper—it is living, active, and powerful. It creates, sustains, sanctifies, and transforms. When we pray for God's Word to spread rapidly, we're praying for the most powerful force in existence to penetrate hearts and minds. Scripture upholds all things, serves as our weapon against spiritual darkness, and keeps us from sin.

Today, consider how you're engaging with God's Word. Are you allowing it to be a lamp unto your feet? The victorious Christian life begins with immersing ourselves in Scripture, not as a duty, but as desperate hunger for the voice of God. Let His Word dwell richly within you, transforming your mind and directing your steps toward His purposes.

Day 2: Prayer—Where Victory Begins Reading: 2 Thes 3:1-2; Col 4:2-4; Mt 9:37-38

Devotional: Prayer is more essential than our next breath. It's not another item on our spiritual checklist—it's the very atmosphere of relationship with our Father. Paul's urgent prayer requests reveal what matters most: that God's Word would spread swiftly, that believers would be protected from evil, and that Christ would be glorified. Yet how many hindrances choke out our prayer lives—busyness, worry, apathy, self-sufficiency? Victory isn't achieved through our strength but accessed through humble dependence in prayer.

Today, identify what hinders your prayer life. Confess your prayerlessness and ask God to awaken fresh hunger for communion with Him. Join with other believers in corporate prayer, for it's there we enter the fullness of relationship with our heavenly Father.

Day 3: God's Faithfulness—Our Foundation

Reading: 2 Thes 3:3; Phil 1:6; Jud 1:24

Devotional: You are on the winning team. Not because of your performance, but because of God's faithfulness. He who began a good work in you will complete it. He establishes your faith and guards you from the enemy. This isn't wishful thinking—it's the promise of the One who cannot lie. When financial pressures mount, when physical ailments persist, when spiritual battles rage, the question confronts us: Do we believe God is who He says He is? Will we trust His strength or rely on our own? The victorious

Christian life isn't marked by absence of struggle but by confident trust in God's unfailing faithfulness.

Today, rehearse God's past faithfulness in your life. Let those memories anchor your soul in present storms, knowing He will present you faultless before His throne with exceeding joy.

Day 4: Transformed by Divine Love Reading: 2 Thes 3:5; 1 Jn 4:7-19; Ro 5:8

Devotional: We don't generate God's love through willpower—He directs our hearts into it. His love is ancient, powerful, unconditional, vast, sacrificial, personal, patient, humbling, soul-satisfying, secure, and generous. This transforming love pursued you while you were still His enemy. It spared nothing, not even His Son. As God directs your heart into His love, you'll discover the things that once captivated you lose their grip. His love revolutionizes everything—first in salvation, then in daily sanctification. You begin responding to His Spirit rather than your flesh. Reflect on your recent interactions: Are they marked by God's self-giving love? His love isn't merely something we receive; it flows through us to others.

Today, ask God to direct your heart deeper into His incomprehensible love, that it might overflow to those around you.

**Day 5: The Patience of Christ—Enduring with Purpose
Reading: 2 Thes 3:5; Ja 5:7-11; 2 Pe 3:9**

Devotional: To live in the patience of Christ means understanding His character and valuing His will above our own. Consider His patience—sending prophets, miracles, and ultimately His Son to reach humanity. He suffered long, was betrayed, yet forgave. He delayed judgment to pour Himself out for the lost. Growing in godliness isn't achieved through human effort but received as God's gift. He transforms our minds, gives us new hearts, and empowers us to reflect Christ's patience in everyday trenches—with difficult coworkers, rebellious children, or frustrating circumstances. Victory isn't found in our strength but in surrendering to His direction. Today, identify where impatience controls you. Confess your insufficiency and invite God to work His patience through you, making you more like Jesus in longsuffering, forgiveness, and grace toward others.

Small Group Study Guide

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Living as Victors

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to see and understand His word as you discuss the sermon.

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

1. Prayer is Where the Action Is - Prayer is more essential than our next breath; it's how we enter into fullness of relationship with God
2. Christian, You Are On The Winning Team - God is faithful to establish our faith and guard us from the enemy
3. Living Life with Godly Love & Patience - Growing in godliness is God's work in us, not our own effort

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

1. Paul identifies four categories of prayer in these verses. Which of the four resonates most with you right now and why? Praying for God's word to be shared, Praying for the word to go out swiftly, Praying that the word glorifies Jesus, Praying for protection from unbelievers and spiritual warfare.
2. The sermon listed 11 hindrances to the gospel going out swiftly (unreasonable people, faithlessness, busyness, prayerlessness, fear, etc.). Which of these do you struggle with most? How has it affected your witness?
3. The pastor said, "Prayer is more essential than our next breath." How does your current prayer life reflect (or not reflect) this truth? What would need to change for prayer to become this central in your life?
4. Personal Reflection: On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your investment in both personal AND corporate prayer? What's one practical step you could take this week to grow?
5. Paul says God is faithful to "establish" and "guard" us. Share a specific time when you experienced God's faithfulness in establishing your faith or protecting you from spiritual attack.

6. The pastor notes that "Paul's confidence was in the Lord and not in the Thessalonians." How does this principle challenge our culture's emphasis on self-reliance and personal achievement? How should it change the way we approach spiritual growth?
7. What does true freedom look like according to this passage? How is it different from the world's definition of freedom?
8. The sermon describes God's love with powerful descriptors: ancient, powerful, unconditional, vast, sacrificial, personal, patient, humbling, soul-satisfying, secure, and generous. Which of these characteristics of God's love do you need to be reminded of most right now?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those. *Answer these three questions in small groups then come back together to share your answers:*

1. What is one truth about God's character from today's sermon that you need to cling to this week?
2. Based on this passage, how does God see you as His child? What lie about your identity do you need to replace with this truth?
3. What is one specific, measurable action you will take this week to live out your identity in Christ?

Closing Prayer Points:

- Thank God for His faithfulness to establish and guard us.
- Pray for specific hindrances to the gospel each person shared.
- Ask God to direct hearts into His love and patience.
- Pray for victory in the specific areas each person committed to this week

Discussion Questions

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5, Living as Victors

1. Paul emphasizes prayer as vital to the Christian life, even more essential than our next breath. How would your daily priorities and schedule change if you truly believed prayer was more important than any physical need?
2. The sermon lists numerous hindrances to the gospel spreading swiftly, including busyness, fear, prayerlessness, and divisiveness. Which of these obstacles do you most struggle with personally, and what practical steps might God be calling you to take?
3. Paul prays that God's word would be glorified through the lives of believers. In what specific ways does your life currently bring honor to Christ, and where might you be obscuring His glory rather than revealing it?
4. The sermon states that true freedom is not answering to no one, but rather belonging completely to God. How does this biblical definition of freedom challenge the cultural understanding of independence and autonomy that surrounds us?
5. Reflecting on the comprehensive list of what God's word accomplishes, which aspect of Scripture's power do you most need to experience in your current season of life?
6. The pastor asks whether your life is marked by the joy of the Lord or consumed by the comforts and worries of this world. What honest assessment would you give of where your time, treasure, and attention are currently invested?
7. Paul's confidence was in the Lord and not in the Thessalonians themselves. How does placing confidence in God rather than human ability change the way we approach ministry, relationships, and personal growth?
8. The sermon describes God's love as so ancient it has no beginning, so powerful it brings life from death, and so personal He knows you by name. Which characteristic of God's love do you find most difficult to accept or experience, and why?
9. Growing in godliness is described as more about God's work than our effort, yet we are called to invest through spiritual disciplines and obedience. How do you balance resting in God's transforming power while actively participating in your sanctification?
10. When you consider your recent interactions with others through the lens of Christ's patience, where do you see evidence of spiritual growth, and where do you recognize the need for God to further direct your heart?

Dinner Conversation Starters

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Living as Victors

1. Prayer as Our “First Response,” Not a Last Resort

The sermon said prayer is actually “more essential than our next breath.” As a family, when something hard or stressful happens, what is usually our first response—worry, planning, complaining, or prayer? How could we practically make prayer our first response together this week (before school, before bed, before big decisions, etc.)?

2. Helping God’s Word “Run Swiftly”

Paul prayed that the word of the Lord would “run swiftly” and be glorified. What are some things in our lives that might slow down or hinder God’s word—busyness, fear of what people think, distractions, or something else? Can each of us name one person we could encourage, pray for, or share God’s love with this week?

3. Living Like We’re on the Winning Team

The sermon reminded us that God is faithful to “establish” us and “guard” us from the evil one. Do we live more like we’re on a winning team (confident in God’s promises) or on a losing team (discouraged, fearful, defeated)? What is one area in your life right now where you need to trust that God really is faithful and “able to keep you from stumbling”?

4. Experiencing and Reflecting God’s Love

We heard many descriptions of God’s love: powerful, personal, patient, sacrificial, secure. Which phrase about God’s love (for example, “So personal...He knows you by name” or “So patient...He endures our fits and failures”) means the most to you right now, and why? How could our family reflect that kind of love to each other more intentionally this week?

5. Growing in the Patience of Christ

The sermon said that being in “the patience of Christ” means we become more long-suffering, forgiving, gracious, kind, and truthful. Think about the last week: was there a moment when you reacted in impatience or frustration? How might that same moment have looked if you were responding with the patience of Christ? Is there anyone we need to forgive, show grace to, or be more patient with—and how can we help each other do that?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Living as Victors

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **“Pray First” in Friend Problems:** When someone at school is mean, leaves them out, or won’t share, teach them to pause and pray (even a tiny, silent prayer) before reacting.

Discussion Questions:

- a. When someone is unkind, what do you usually feel like doing first?
 - b. What could a short prayer sound like in that moment? (“Jesus, help me...”)
 - c. How might praying first help you make a better choice?
2. **Using Words that Show God’s Love:** Connect God’s love to how they speak to siblings, parents, and friends (tone, words, apologies).

Discussion Questions:

- a. What kind of words would show God’s love in that moment?
 - b. What kind of words would NOT show God’s love?
 - c. How do you think Jesus feels when we choose kind words instead of hurtful ones?
3. **Patience with Screens and Toys:** Help them practice patience and self-control in simple “waiting” situations: sharing toys, waiting their turn on a tablet, game, or TV.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What does your heart feel like doing when you have to wait?
- b. How could you show the patience of Jesus while you wait?
- c. What could you do during that time that would make God happy (help someone, draw, read, sing, etc.)?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Sharing God’s Love in Friend Groups:** Help them see themselves as part of God’s “winning team” at school, on teams, and in clubs—using their words and actions to show Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What are some ways God might want you to act differently than the crowd?
- b. Which is harder for you: speaking up kindly, or choosing to walk away? Why?

- c. How could you pray before school so that God's Word can 'run swiftly' through how you act and talk?

2. **Godliness in Early Digital Spaces (YouTube, Games, Chats)**: Connect the sermon's idea of being guarded from evil and growing in godliness to what they watch, play, and chat about.

Discussion Questions:

- a. How can you tell if something online (video, game, meme) is helping you be more like Jesus or pulling you away from Him?
 - b. If a friend sends you something you know isn't good, what could you say or do?
 - c. How can prayer help you make a good choice in that moment?
3. **Practicing Forgiveness and Patience with Friends**: Tie "the patience of Christ" and God's love to real friendship conflicts (being left out, gossip, broken trust).

Discussion Questions:

- a. What are some feelings you might have in that situation?
- b. What would 'getting even' look like? What would 'being patient like Jesus' look like?
- c. How could you bring this to God in prayer instead of just reacting?
- d. Is forgiving someone the same as pretending it didn't hurt or trusting them immediately again?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Living as Victors in Friends, Social Media, and Identity**: Apply "you are on the winning team" and "God's love is secure" to identity issues, comparison, and social media approval.

Discussion Questions:

- a. When your value feels tied to likes, comments, or views, what lies might you be believing about who you are?
 - b. How does knowing you're deeply loved, known, and secure in Christ push back against that?
 - c. What could a short, honest prayer look like in that moment?
 - d. Are there any accounts you follow that constantly make you compare yourself or feel less-than?
2. **Godliness in Group Chats, DMs, and Text Threads**: Bring in "hindrances to the Gospel" and "the patience of Christ" where there's gossip, drama, sarcasm, and crude humor online.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What are the options: join in, stay silent, or say something? What are the risks of each?
 - b. How can you 'let God's Word be glorified' in a chat like that—without sounding fake or preachy?
 - c. What's a respectful way to step out of a toxic conversation or shut it down?
 - d. How could you prepare ahead of time (in prayer and in your mind) so you're ready for moments like this?
3. Responding to Pressure and Temptation as "Victors," Not Victims: Apply the sermon's message that God is faithful to strengthen and guard us, and that growing in godliness is God's work in us, to peer pressure and moral choices.

Discussion Questions:

- a. In those moments, do you feel more like a victim of pressure, or someone who already has victory in Christ? Why?
- b. What lies might the enemy be telling you in those situations (everyone does it, it's not a big deal, you'll lose your friends, etc.)?
- c. How does God's promise to 'establish you and guard you from the evil one' change the way you see these choices?
- d. What boundaries and safeguards do you want in place for your digital life (e.g., no private DMs with strangers, no deleting conversations, accountability apps)?

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 3:1-5

Living as Victors

1. Praying Before You Post

Bible Reference: “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified... and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.”

Application: Before entering digital or social spaces (group chats, Discord servers, TikTok, IG, parties, friend groups), pray that: God’s truth would be honored through you, You’d be protected from toxic and harmful influences, You’d be bold but loving with your faith.

Scenario: You’re about to go live, join a gaming voice chat, or hop into a group chat where the conversation often slides into trash talk, bullying, or drama. You know it can easily pull you into gossip, crude jokes, or subtle compromise.

Discussion: What would it look like for you to literally pause and pray, “God, let Your word and Your character be seen in how I speak and type right now—protect me from going along with what’s wrong,” before you open that app or join that group?

2. Letting God’s Word Shape Your Feed

Bible Reference:

- “For the word of God is living and powerful...” (Hebrews 4:12)
- “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word... Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:9, 11)

Application: Filter what you consume and create online through Scripture: If it normalizes sin, mocks God, or dishonors people, don’t watch, like, or share it. Let time in the Word shape the kind of content, conversations, and humor you engage in.

Scenario: Your For You Page is full of “funny” videos that are sexual, mocking people made in God’s image, or glorifying addictions and self-destruction. Your friends spam each other with these and expect you to react, laugh, and repost.

Discussion: If God’s word is “living and powerful,” how should it affect what you allow to live in your feed and in your mind—and what specific kind of content do you need to unfollow or mute because it’s pulling you away from Jesus?

3. Living Like You're on the Winning Team

Bible References:

- “But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.” (2 Thessalonians 3:3)
- “...He who has begun a good work in you will complete it...” (Philippians 1:6)

Application: See yourself as someone God is actively strengthening and guarding, not as a helpless victim of pressure, trends, or algorithms. Your victory is based on God's faithfulness, not your perfection.

Scenario: You're at a hangout where everyone is drinking, vaping, watching explicit content, or hooking up. You feel the pressure: “If I don't join in, I'll be the weird one.” You know it compromises what God calls you to, but you feel outnumbered and weak.

Discussion: In that moment, what changes if you truly believe, “The Lord is faithful to establish and guard me” and “He will complete the work He started in me”? How would a “winning team” mindset affect your choices, even if you stand alone?

4. Resisting the “Everyone's Doing It” Mentality

Bible References:

- a. “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” (Romans 12:2)
- b. “...the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers...” (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Application: Refuse to let culture, trends, and peer approval be your standard. Let God renew your mind so you see through the lies behind certain “normal” behaviors, content, and attitudes in your crowd.

Scenario: Your group normalizes sending nudes, sharing explicit memes, “dark humor,” or cheating on schoolwork. It's just “how people are now.” If you push back, you're “judgy” or “religious.”

Discussion: What specific attitudes or behaviors in your friend group or online spaces feel “normal,” but actually go against God's truth—and what would it look like for your mind to be renewed so you stop calling sin “normal” or “no big deal”?

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.