## DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE



#### TEXT SUMMARY

Our text, <u>1 Thessalonians 1:1-5</u>, is the opening words of Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica. You can think of the salutation and opening paragraph of an epistle like an overture: the writer often uses that space to announce the themes he will develop in the letter.

Here Paul speaks of his fond memory of the Thessalonian believers' "work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 3).

## INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

- 1. Remember that the epistles were real letters to real people dealing with real problems. What can we learn about the church in Thessalonica from their back-story? See Luke's account of the planting of the Thessalonian church (Acts 17:1-9).
- 2. To get a feel for the letter as a whole, scan through the entire letter to find examples of these themes:
  - Paul's warm **affection** for the believers in Thessalonica
  - Common knowledge Paul shared with them (clauses beginning "we know" and "you know")
  - References to the **Second Coming** of Christ

## **DISCUSSION** (INTERPRETATION):

- What do those three key phrases mean: work of faith, labor of love, steadfastness of hope? Use commentaries and/or paraphrases to examine these key ideas from other angles.
- 2. How does Paul know that God had chosen the believers in Thessalonica? What does this suggest about the **order** of these two crucial events in our salvation? (Which comes first? Which is cause and which is effect?)
  - Our regeneration (being brought from death to life)
  - o Our faith (trusting in Christ for our salvation)

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### SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

We have not finished reflecting on Scripture until we begin to employ first-person pronouns. Here we begin to consider how we must respond to what God has said in His Word.

- In the DISCUSSION (interpretation) phase of this study, we thought about what the phrase "work of faith" means. We often set "work" and "faith" as opposites to one another. But here they seem to work together in the life of a Christ-follower.
  - What does the "work of faith" look like in the life of a believer? If you could follow a Christ-follower around for a month, what evidence would you expect to find in that believer's life?
  - What would be some evidence that the "work of faith" was not in operation in a believer's life?
  - What does the work of faith look like in the life of a mature believer you know?
- 2. In the DISCUSSION phase of this study, we thought about what the phrase "labor of love" means.
  - What are some of the kinds of labor that love imposes on us in our relationships with our loved ones? Similarly, what labor does our love for Christ call us to?
  - How have you seen mature believers commit themselves to the labor of love?
- 3. In the DISCUSSION phase of this study, we thought about what the phrase "steadfastness of hope" means. When you are discouraged, hope seems remote and irrelevant, not steadfast. What are some things that God has used over the years to make your hope in Christ more sturdy and stable and steadfast?