Small Group Guide

1 Thessalonians 3 | "Established and Unshaken"

OVERVIEW

This week's message walked through 1 Thessalonians 3, where Paul expresses his deep concern for the church at Thessalonica and sends Timothy to strengthen and encourage them in their faith. The central themes are the importance of being established in God's word, the reality of trials in the believer's life, the power of genuine love, and the encouragement that comes from faithful community.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Being established in the Word of God is what keeps us from being easily shaken when trials come.
- Trials and tribulation are a guaranteed part of the believer's life, but they carry eternal purpose.
- Genuine love for one another is the clearest sign of spiritual maturity and the primary way others recognize us as disciples of Jesus.
- Fervent, consistent, and intentional prayer is an act of deep investment in the lives of others.
- Spiritual growth requires more than Sunday attendance. It requires daily engagement with Scripture, prayer, and community.

GETTING STARTED

Use one of these questions to open your group conversation and help everyone feel comfortable participating.

1 Think of a time when you received a piece of good news that completely changed your mood or outlook. What was it like in the moments before you heard it?

2 When you hear the word "established," what comes to mind? What does it look like in everyday life to be established in something?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

On Being Established in Faith

1 The message described being "easily shaken" using the image of a dog wagging its tail – unstable and unsteady. What are the things in your own life that most often knock you off course spiritually? Why do you think those particular things have that effect on you?

2 Pastor Jerry said, "If we just come to church on Sunday and that's the highlight of our spiritual life, we will not be established and we will be easily shaken." What does a spiritually established life look like beyond Sunday mornings? What habits or practices have helped you feel more rooted in your faith?

3 Paul used Timothy to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonians in their faith. Who has played that role in your life? Who are you currently playing that role for?

On Trials and Suffering

4 The sermon referenced several passages – John 16:33, James 1:2-4, and 1 Peter 4:12-13 – all of which make clear that trials are not a surprise but an expectation for believers. How does knowing that trials are part of God's design change the way you respond when they come?

5 Pastor Jerry pointed out that God is not just allowing us to suffer, but teaching us through our suffering. Can you think of a specific trial in your life that, looking back, you can see God using to shape or mature you? What did you learn?

6 The message warned against teaching that says the Christian life should be easy and trouble-free. Why do you think that message is so appealing? What is the danger of believing it?

On Love as a Mark of Maturity

7 Pastor Jerry referenced John 13, where Jesus says that people will know we are his disciples by how we love one another. How would the people around you – at work, in your neighborhood, in your family – describe the way you love others? Is that a comfortable question to sit with?

8 The sermon described agape love as "both sacrificial and unconditional" and said it can only come from the Holy Spirit working within us. What is the difference between loving others in your own strength versus loving others through the Spirit? Have you experienced that difference?

On Prayer and Community

9 Paul prayed "night and day" for the Thessalonians – intensely and consistently. How would you honestly describe your current prayer life? Is it more like a passing glance or a fervent investment?

10 Paul's emotional state was deeply tied to the well-being of the people he loved and served. He said, "We live if you stand fast." Is there someone in your life whose spiritual health you feel that kind of investment in? What does that look like practically?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or two of these to focus on as a group or as individuals this week.

- **Audit your spiritual diet.** Honestly evaluate how much time you are spending in God's word outside of Sunday. Identify one specific time in your day to open Scripture and sit with it, even for ten minutes.
- **Identify what shakes you.** Write down two or three things that consistently knock you off course spiritually. Bring those things to God in prayer this week and ask him to show you what area of your faith needs to be more deeply rooted.
- **Pray intentionally for someone.** Choose one person in your life – someone who is struggling, someone who does not yet know Jesus, or someone in your church family – and commit to praying for them specifically and consistently every day this week. Do not make it a passing prayer. Be intentional.
- **Encourage a fellow believer.** Paul was enormously encouraged by Timothy's good report about the Thessalonians. Think of someone in your church or small group who is going through a hard season. Reach out to them this week with a specific word of encouragement about what you see God doing in their life.
- **Share the gospel.** The sermon closed with a reminder that the foundation of everything is salvation through Jesus Christ alone. Is there someone in your life who does not know Jesus? Ask God to open a door this week for you to share what he has done for you.