

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. ***Enjoy discovering more about Him!***

"SPIRITUAL AFTERCARE" | 1 THESSALONIANS 3 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

How have you seen believers support and pray for other believers from far away?

"Spiritual Aftercare" (1 Thess 3: 1-8)

Paul worried about new believers because some were suffering, and temptation can be especially strong in those moments. **Why is it that when someone is new in the faith or suffering temptation is strong? What types of temptation usually come?**

Paul sent Timothy to encourage and strengthen the Thessalonians. **How can visiting pastors and guest speakers be encouraging to a group of believers? What does that look like in churches today?**

"Divine Care" (1 Thess 3: 9-13)

Paul shares that his group, though far away, prays "earnestly" for the Thessalonians and then he writes a quick prayer, asking that God increases their love and holiness. **How is prayer from people far away encouraging? How would more love and holiness help a group that is inexperienced and suffering?**

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Paul sent both help and prayer to the Thessalonians because of his love and sense of responsibility towards them. **Has God put people in your life you sense you are to love and support like that? How can you intentionally pray and send help to these people? Ask God to give you ideas and opportunities to help others grow in love and holiness.**

1 Thessalonians 3

7-30-23

Spiritual Aftercare

I. Slide1 Announce:

A. Slide2-6 Lar: GS. DC. Ladies Night. Movie Night. Expositors Collective.

B. Slide7 Prayer:

II. Slide8a Intro: Spiritual Aftercare

A. **Illust:** One of the most wonderful joys in life is *the birth of a child*. Then, when all things are settled, the proud parents bring their little bundle of joy home. **But that's not the end!** It's only the beginning of a long and tedious process, as the infant needs much care in order to grow and develop *physically and emotionally*.

1. So this involves regular feeding, diaper-changing, bathing, and keeping it safe from all harm and danger. When the new-born **cries**, it needs comfort. When it is **tired**, it needs to be rocked to sleep. When it has a **fever**, it needs medicine. When it develops **rashes**, it needs special cream [*endearingly called* Butt Paste, *or Brazillians call* Boom Boom Cream].
2. Such great care and attention usually puts **great demands** on the parents who *may not have much rest and sleep* for many days. Being a parent is not for the faint of heart. It's not easy to provide all the **after-care** that a new-born infant needs.
3. **Well**, in the same way, it is not easy to provide all the **spiritual after-care** that a new Christian needs. It is one thing to rejoice when one is **saved**, **but** it is another thing altogether to provide **the spiritual care** they need after that in order to grow into **full Christian maturity**.
 - a) They need plenty of *loving encouragement, instruction, guidance and help* from other Christians. That's our chapter 3.

B. Slide8b Big Idea: We are to *make disciples* and not just *make converts*.

C. Ch.3: Timothy's Mission (1-5). Timothy's Report (6-8). Paul's Prayers (9-13).

D. **Outline:** **Spiritual Aftercare** (1-8). **Divine Care** (9-13).

III. Slide9 **SPIRITUAL AFTERCARE (1-8) READ**

A. Slide10 **Feeling the Weight of Discipleship.**

B. **I can bear it no longer** (2x's). Hear the **weight** on Paul's shoulders? How did he make ministry choices about staffing and travels?

1. **He thought** - about the Thessalonians.

This is simply **sanctified reflection** and **thinking**.

2. **He assessed** - the needs in Thessalonica and in Athens.

3. **He felt** ... he was feeling pressure, he could **bear it no longer**. He was uncertain of how they would fare (5).

C. **We all need to learn to live with messiness** in discerning the will of God and meeting people's needs.

1. Here are 4 things: **Pray earnestly. Think hard. Feel the pressure. And be discerning of the Holy Spirit.**

D. Slide11 **We were willing to be left behind in Athens alone** (1b) - Alone, not normally a good thing.

1. Paul, Timothy, Silas were in Berea (after Thes). **He dispatches Silas** most likely to Philippi. **Timothy goes back to Thes. Paul** heads to Athens **alone**

2. Sometimes ministry is **lonely**. Sometimes life is **lonely**. Sometimes God calls us to **Go it Alone**.

a) **What situation do you feel totally alone in right now?** We've all experienced a time when we wonder why our spouse, or family, or church friends just aren't there for us. **But just maybe**, that's when **God wants you all to Himself?**

b) **Maybe the feeling is like, remember** Sandra Bullock & George Clooney in the space drama called **Gravity?** She was floating out into space alone, and she whispered, **"anybody - please call me."**

3. **Loneliness** can be a tough road. Think of the value then Paul placed on **partnership** in gospel ministry.

4. *Paul on pins and needles*, wondering about the spiritual well-being of his children in the faith. Like **parents** waiting to hear any word from their children living at college, or out of state.
- E. *Slide12 That no one be moved by these afflictions* (3) (*saino*) *To wag like a dogs tail*. Only time used. **Picture it methodically slowly swinging back/forth**. (emotional swings)
1. Or maybe you're like my dog *Sully's short tail* (which moves fast like this).
- F. *Slide13 The tempter* (5) - refers to *Satan*. Paul likely considered the Thessalonians to be especially vulnerable to temptation *because* they had converted to faith in Christ only recently.
1. The NT frequently describes Satan's attempts to take advantage of people who are either **young in the faith** or **in a weakened state**.
 2. **Note**: Paul was not ignorant of **Satan's schemes** (2 Cor. 2:11), **nor** vulnerable to his **methods** (Eph.6:11), **nor** naïve about his **intent** (1 Pet.5:8), **so** he takes decisive action by sending Timothy to block Satan's expected attack.
- G. *Slide14 Faithfulness For Today*.
- H. **Supply what is lacking in your faith** (10) - This phrase refers to their need for **further instruction**, **not** to a failure to have genuine faith in Christ.
1. Paul evangelized them. Tim **strengthened** them (not to *survey* them but support em)
 2. Paul probably is anticipating their need to be instructed on questions about *Christ's return and those who have died* (ch.4).
- I. **Note your faith** in (2,5,6,7,10) all pointing to their **afflictions** & **suffering**.
- J. *Slide15 Continued Spiritual Growth*.
- K. Paul's great concern was **not** their *comfort and safety* but their **faith** (2,5,6,7,10), their **love** (12), and their **holiness** (13).
1. Holiness: the quality of being personally **dedicated** to God; **either by** being **set apart**, **by** being **morally pure**, **or by** being **devoted** to God.

L. **Standing fast** (8) - Paul's favorite expression for staying faithful to God and His gospel message.

M. **Slide 16a Forewarned is Forearmed.** (4)

N. The Latin phrase, *praemonitus, praemunitus*, means *Forewarned is Forearmed*.

1. Being warned or cautioned about something before it happens can be the best form of preparation. *We kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction* (and it happened). [*kept imp.tense, repeated warnings*]
 - a) Wow, how imp is follow up w/young believers, to leave converts on warrant of the possible adverse personal consequences of their acceptance of the gospel is to do them a serious injustice. [Inigo Montoya, prepare to die]
 - b) *Yes, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, but* that plan will always include *suffering for the gospel*. We must *forewarn* disciples, so they are *forearmed*. [*through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God Acts 14:22*]

O. **Slide 16b We are destined/appointed for this** (for what? afflictions) - Paul reminds the new believers that persecution is **not** a sign of *God's wrath*; **rather**, **faith and suffering** are **both part** of the Christian life.

1. **Slide 16c Phil 1:29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for His sake.**
2. **Also remember** that *Messiah, the prophets, and the apostles all* suffered persecution, **so** the *Thessalonians* shouldn't be discouraged by their experience
3. **Slide 16d** So please know, **God has Affliction Appointments** for all of us (on **His** day planner - on your day planner)

P. **So what do we do with all this information?** *Try harder, do better?*

1. **No**, what we look for in our text is **the road that leads to Jesus**.
2. There are 2 types of messages: **man** centered or **Christ** centered.
3. Do we make Paul (or Tim) **the hero of the message** or **Jesus**? Let's turn our aim to our **God**.

IV. Slide17_{auto}18 **DIVINE CARE (9-13)** *READ* [emphasize **God** in red]

A. Slide19 **God's Coworker.** (2)

B. **Not** Paul's coworker, *though he was*. Such a lofty & unusual title. Paul unfolds this

1. 1 Corinth 3:5-9 *NLT After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only **God's servants** through whom you believed the Good News. **Each of us did the work the Lord gave us.** 6 I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, *but it was **God** who made it grow.* 7 *It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that **God makes the seed grow.*** 8 *The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work.* 9 *For we are **both God's workers.** And you are **God's field.** You are **God's building.****

C. Slide20 **Our Security Is In God Alone.** (1)

D. Left behind in Athens **alone** ... yet never **alone**

1. Paul might have been thinking about what David said (**alone** 6x's Ps.62).

E. Ps.62 *1 For God **alone** my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.*
*2 He **alone** is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken ...*
*5 For God **alone**, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.* 6 *He **only** is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.* (Heb. 78 - ak)

F. Slide21a **Prayers To God.** (9-13) [prayers for himself 9-11; prayers for them 12,13]

G. What do you do when people you love, need your help, **but** you can't go to them?

1. Many friends in our church experienced this during **Covid**, *regarding trying to visit love ones in hospitals.* The family members and friends were **alone, hurting alone, and even some died alone.**
2. Paul couldn't go back and see his new friends/new believers in Thes, though he tried. In this case he could send someone qualified on his behalf. **And** one more thing, **he could Pray.** We can always **pray** for them,

because prayer is **not limited to time** or **place**. [4 prayers:]

H. **Slide21b Thanksgiving to God** (9) - **what thanksgiving can we return to God for you**

1. Paul knows he **cannot** take credit for the believers' perseverance through suffering - *he was not there with them*. **He gives thanks that God strengthened them to endure the persecution.**

I. **Leading of God** (10) - Paul was *praying day/night* to see them again.

J. **Love from God** (12) - Paul already commended the believers for their love (1:3). **Now** he prays that their love will **increase**. **This love should extend not only to persecuted believers, but also to their persecutors.**

K. **Holy before God** (13) - which He expounds on in the next chapter.

L. **Prayer:** Ty for those you sent into our lives to provide us *Spiritual Aftercare & Your Divine Care*.

M. Keywords: aftercare, alone, faith.