

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!**

"BLUEPRINTS FOR BEING FULLY ALIVE" | 1 THESSALONIANS 1 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What are you thankful for in a church?

"An Energetic Church" (1 Thess 1: 1-3)

Paul is thankful for the energy and effort the Thessalonians show with their "work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope." **Why is their reason for their work and labor important? How can actions or work show faith, love and or hope?**

"An Exemplary Church" (1 Thess 1: 4-5)

Paul knows the gospel has taken hold in lives of the Thessalonians because the word was shared, its impact was powerful, the Holy Spirit filled them, and the people showed conviction. **What are ways people show the same impact of the gospel today?**

"An Evangelistic Church" (1 Thess 1: 6-8)

Paul is grateful for how the Thessalonians became imitators of Jesus and have shared the gospel throughout their region. **Who recently has been a good example of living like Jesus? What helps our example to make an impact on others?**

"An Expectant Church" (1 Thess 1: 9-10)

Paul is glad the Thessalonians have turned from idols and wait expectantly for Jesus to come again. **Why should Jesus coming again motivate his followers to serve others and share the gospel?**

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Paul is so thankful for how the gospel has taken hold in the lives of the Thessalonians and is the foundation of a new way of life, a shared culture, that reflects Jesus. **How has the gospel impacted your life? Are you living out the gospel in a community of believers. Pray that God would use you to help create a community built on the gospel.**

1 Thessalonians 1

7-16-23

Blueprints For Being FULLY ALIVE

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-7 Andrew L: @Risk. Fellowship Night. Fostering a Hope Community. Women's Ministry. Missions. CK.
- B. Slide8 Baby Dedication: Henry Robert Perl. (AL)
- C. Slide9 Building on Faith: (see notes)

II. Slide10 Intro: Blueprints For Being FULLY ALIVE

- A. Blueprints are a plan for building something. No extra's. No fluff. Just follow the details. Here are plans for building an *Exemplary Church*, an *Ideal Congregation*, a *Victorious Christian Life*, and how a believer can be **Fully Alive**.
 1. As an electrician, I needed to know not only *the electrical plans*, but I also needed to know how they worked **concurrently** with everything else.
 2. A good builder must **know the plans AND determine to follow its details**.
 - a) John Powell describes in his book *Fully Human Fully Alive ...*

*“Fully alive people are not necessarily happy all the time. No they experience failure as well as success. They are open to both pain & pleasure. They have many questions & some answers. They cry & they laugh. They dream & they hope. The only thing that remains *alien* to their experience of life is passivity & apathy. They say a strong “yes” to life & a resounding “amen” to love. They feel the strong stings of growing, but their sleeves are always rolled up, their minds are whirring, & their hearts are ablaze.”* [that sounds like the church members at *Thessalonica*]
- B. If we asked Paul, *Paul, why should we read your 1st letter you wrote nearly 2000 years ago, what does it have for me in 2023?*
 1. I think Paul would answer ... Every Christian should expect to **grow in holiness** over the course of his/her life. To do this you must **cling to your hope in Christ**, and if you do you will see **several clear results** in your life: **like avoiding sexual immorality, refusing to defraud others, appreciating those Christians who serve**

on your behalf, refusing to repay evil for evil, rejoicing always, praying without ceasing, and giving thanks in all things - just to name a few.

C. **Slide11** Let's open with reading **Acts 17:1-9**, *Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey*.

1. **Slide12 Map**. After **Thes** he went south to **Athens**, from there sent Tim back. Later Tim shows up in **Corinth** to update Paul. **Paul writes 1st Thes during 18 months stay there.** [Known as 1 of his earliest letters (ad 51)]
2. **Today** – it is called *Thessaloniki*, it's a bustling center of northern Greece (formerly Macedonia). 1 of the few NT cities *still flourishing*.

D. Paul opens by listing **5 characteristics** of the church in Thessalonica, that he give *thanks to God for*.

1. The church was: *Energetic. Exemplary. Evangelistic. & Expectant.*

III. **Slide13 AN ENERGETIC CHURCH FAITH, LOVE, HOPE (1-3) Read**

A. (1) **Grace** – Paul uses *twice as much* as all the NT writers. [aka, Paul's *watchword*]

1. **Slide14 Grace** points to **God** as the **source** of *the highest good*.
2. **Peace** refers to mankind as the **recipient** of *divine favor*.

B. These 3 become the *structure* of the letter: **Faith** ch.1. **Love** ch.2,3. **Hope** ch.4,5.

1. Some have called them the three ingredients to the Christian life. **Faith** rests on the **Past**; **Love** acts in the **Present**; **Hope** looks to the **Future**.

C. **Work of Faith** – we learn a lot about someone on *how they work*. (Barclay)

1. **Some** work in **fear of the whip**. **Some** for hope of gain. **Some** in sense of duty. **Others** are inspired by faith.
2. **Faith?** - Faith that your work has been given and entrusted to you **by God**, and that you are specifically working **for Him**.

D. **Labor of Love** – *The storks are so strong in their affection for their young, they are not afraid even to die for them. There have been instances of forest fires, in which they flew to and fro, with water in their beaks, to save their nests upon the burning houses. It once happened at Delft in Holland, that, finding it impossible to preserve*

their brood, they placed themselves upon the nest, spread over them their wings, and so perished with them in the flames. (that, is a labor of love)

1. Someone once asked **Susanna Wesley** which one of her 11 children she loved the most. She wisely replied, "*I love the one who's sick until he's well, and the one who's away until he comes home.*"

E. **Steadfastness of Hope** – always in the Christian context **Hope** has an *air of certainty* about it.

1. One can endure anything so long as he/she has **hope**, for then they are not walking to *the night*, but to *the Dawn*.

IV. Slide15 **AN EXEMPLARY CHURCH 4-WHEEL DRIVE GOSPEL (4,5)** *Read*

A. The 4-wheel drive Gospel (5): *in word, but also in power and in the HS and with full conviction.* [*our gospel - we must lay hold of it, and it must lay hold of us*]

B. **In Word** – The scriptures were preached, truth was declared there, as we read in **Acts 17**. [reasoned (2). explaining (3). demonstrated (3). persuaded (4). not persuaded (5)]

1. Slide16a *The gospel is neither a discussion nor a debate. It is an announcement.*¹

C. **In Power** – *real, compelling, gripping, & changing power.*

1. They **changed**, they were **different**. (9) *turning to God from idols.*

a) Slide16b “The glory of the gospel is that when the church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it.” D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

D. **In the Holy Spirit** – behind the power ... was **God Himself**.

1. The H.S. touches the human spirit. He ministers to our deepest needs. He fills us. He ministers to our minds & our hearts from within.

E. **With Full Conviction** – *w/full assurance, w/full confidence.* Lightfoot

1. *It moved the wills of the Thessalonians:* They acted. They did something about it. They yielded their lives to God.
2. Slide16c “The **gospel** is not made to dominate the world (i.e. crusades). It's **the grain of sand** that upsets the world's machinery. One can't inhale its

¹ Paul Rees

fragrance and be content to leave everything the way it is." Jean Sullivan

V. Slide17 **AN EVANGELISTIC CHURCH** IMITATORS, EXAMPLES, MISSIONARIES (6-8)

Read

A. **Imitators** of us and of the Lord -

B. You became an **Example** to all the believers -

1. Piper: *Don't underestimate the power of **the example of a person or church in the lives of others.***
2. Since coming to Christ - does your life/lifestyle give unbelievers an excuse for *rejecting* Christ, or does your life/lifestyle make it easy for others to talk about Jesus?

C. **Missionaries** - (8) *For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, **but** your faith in God has **gone forth everywhere.***

1. **Sounded forth** - *something reverberating, ringing out, echoing outwardly.*
 - a) At a time where it was safer to be quiet to avoid danger and persecution, the Christians blazoned forth their faith.
2. **Macedonia & Achaia** = the whole of Greece at that time.
3. **What instrument depicts your faith?** A Trumpet? A kazoo? A clanging cymbal? A bull-horn? A Violin?

D. **How did they do this?** By their lives, *their faith went forth everywhere they went.*

E. Remember in Acts 17 how the city fathers described Paul and his buddies affect on their city? *They turned the world upside down.* (In 3 months)

1. **Christianity is revolutionary!** (*revolve*, a complete circular turn)
2. The way to change **the world** is to change **the individuals** in it.
 - a) *You can't have a **better world** without **better people.** You can't have **better people** without a **better heart** (changed heart).*

F. Slide18 **The Gospel Cycle:** Gospel Came To You. **We Modeled It.** Gospel Received By You. **You Modeled it.** Gospel Went Out From You. [*disciples making disciples*]

VI. Slide 19 **AN EXPECTANT CHURCH TO SERVE, TO WAIT (9,10)**

A. **To Serve** (God) -

1. They turned to God from Idols - *They didn't leave Idols to find God; They found God, then forsook their idols.*
2. Turn from any *cheap-thing/pleasure/thrill* you've been trying to *satisfy yourselves with.*

B. **To Wait** (for the 2nd Coming) - There was 300-365 prophecies that came to pass regarding Jesus is **1st Coming**. There's 3 x's that +, of his **2nd Coming (1,845)**. We can be sure if He fulfilled all 300+ in His **1st**, He will do the same in His **2nd**.

1. **But** ... they were so expectant of His 2nd Coming they **checked out** (we don't need a job. Jesus is coming soon. Just sat around eating 1st century Twinkies). That's why his next letter he said, *if a man doesn't work, a man doesn't eat.*

C. Whatever we share with baby Christians, lets remember to point them here ... **to the 2nd Coming.**

1. Acts 1:11 *This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, **will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.***
2. Yes, Christ will soon be **crashing back** into our time domain.
3. **Christians** do not be *discouraged, defeated, or despairing*. If you fall to any of these moods remind yourself of this great truth Jesus said, ***I will come again & receive you to Myself** that where I am there you may be also.*

D. Every chapter in 1st Thessalonians ends with the reference to *the return of Jesus Christ*. **Also**, that truth is applied to **daily living**:

1. An eager looking for His return is: an evidence of salvation (1:9,10). Motivation for soul winning (2:17-20). An encouragement for holy living (3:11-13). This truth is a comfort in sorrow (4:18). **And** this truth is a stimulus to have more confidence in the Lord (5:23,24). *Weirsbe*

E. Keywords: Second Coming, Thessalonians, gospel.