

Small Group Study: How do I live for God?

Opening Prayer: Father God, we pray that as we look into Your Word, that You would show us how to live for You and how to bring You glory and honor with our lives. And that You will give us the strength and commitment to obey Your Truth. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

Memory - Meditation Verse: "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." Acts 4:19-20

Opening Discussion:

- If you could tell someone you care about one thing you believe about Jesus Christ, what would you tell them?

Ask people to respond: Use this as an opening discussion about how we should with compassionate boldness and truth about Jesus to those we know and love.

- What is stopping you from sharing what you believe about Jesus?

Ask people to share and then discuss why those that are struggling sharing what they believe about Jesus might be having such a hard time sharing.

What is stopping you? Is it embarrassment? Is it fear of what others will think? Is it not wanting to sound religious, judgmental, or intolerant? Is it unworthiness because of your life style? Is it being unprepared to share? Is it a concern that it won't work? Is it an uncertainty of your faith? What is stopping you?

Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

¹ You know, brothers and sisters that our visit to you was not without results. ² We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. ³ For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. ⁴ On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. ⁵ You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. ⁶ We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. ⁷ Instead, we were like young children among you.

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, ⁸ so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. ⁹ Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. ¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

- What was the motive Paul identifies for sharing the gospel and their very lives with the Thessalonians?

First, he says they had a desire to please God. Also he says that they cared for the people and loved them so much. Those are the motives that should move us to share Christ.

- When Paul says they spoke as those approved by God, entrusted with the gospel, to please God not man (v4), what is he saying? Why does that matter?

In this world, people will be against those who speak on behalf of God but we must remember that we are not called to please men but God.

As an example, the Denver Broncos quarterback is getting a lot of heat from the press because he is committed to Jesus and bold about his witness. Regardless of what you feel about Denver (go 49ers) or Tim Tebow as a quarterback, you must admit, so far he has been bold and compassionate about his witness for Christ. It would be far easier for him to be quiet so the press would leave him alone. As those on TV laugh and mock his one knee prayer that they call "Tebowing" he still continues to do it anyway because he desires to recognize, worship and please God not man.

This idea of being approved by God for speaking the Truth of the Gospel is so important to remember. The world has watered down the truth. Even the church sometimes chooses to water down the truth to make it more acceptable to man. Remember, we are called, approved, entrusted, and empowered by God, not man, to speak the Gospel Truth and that alone is pleasing to God.

- Paul says he cared for them as a mother (7/8) and a father (11). What does that indicate about Paul's approach to the Thessalonians? How effective was Paul?

I believe that Paul is indicating something about his loving and caring approach toward them. I also think he is indicating the kind of close personal relationships they built spending time together. They were very close to the Thessalonians and concerned about the future of the church. The Thessalonians were being parented to become adult believers (aka: Discipleship).

Apparently, from what we have read so far in chapter 1, the faith and actions of the Thessalonians was becoming well known. It appears that transformation had taken place and a watching world was noticing.

- As the Mother or Father of the Church, what was Paul's target? (Verse 12)

To see the Thessalonians live their lives worthy of God.

- What does it mean to live lives worthy of God?

Ask people to share what it means to live lives worthy of God. Discuss what that look like?

Closing Discussion:

- What has been your method for sharing your faith? How does it compare with Paul's?

Ask people to share about how they have shared their faith. Discuss Paul's approach in comparison.

- What has been your motive for sharing your faith? How does it compare with Paul's motive?

Discuss the motives that have moved those in your group to share their faith. Is your motive love and compassion? Is it pleasing God? Is it fear? Is it religious duty? Is it judgmental? Is it anger? Is it loneliness? Is it pride... trying to show a better than thou attitude? What motivates you to share your faith?

Discuss Paul's approach in comparison.

Close by praying for one another to live and share their faith because of love.