



WINTER 2023 // WEEK 2

Life Group Questions

A People of Hope // January 21/22, 2023

The Marks of Gospel Ministry // 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

Introduction

This week's passage presents a defense of the ministry of Paul, Silas, and Timothy among the Thessalonians. They respond to accusations about their motives and the effectiveness in their short time of ministry that might be unsettling to the Christians in Thessalonica.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Due to preferences over a wide range of groups, we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) If you could spend a day with one of the original twelve Apostles, who would you spend it with? What would you want to talk about?

- 2) What is the worst bit of advice you have ever received?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
 - 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.
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Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) What aspect of this week's message made you think *after* you left the church building?
- 2) What do we learn about God from the defense of their ministry that Paul, Silas, and Timothy give?
- 3) Discuss some of the specific accusations that were apparently made against the ministry of Paul, Silas, and Timothy (e.g, they were teaching things that were false, they have impure motives, they are doing it for profit, etc.).

What do these men of God say in response to those accusations?

How would these responses alleviate the concerns of and encourage the Thessalonians?

- 4) From what Paul, Silas, and Timothy say in defense of their ministry to the Thessalonian church, what specific ways can we discern between church teachers and leaders who demonstrate godly character and those who do not?

Do you think there is a danger for Christians to use the gospel or opportunities for Christian service for their own benefit? Explain. Have you ever felt that temptation? (The prayer focus below is an opportunity to talk to God about this).

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

Prayer Focus: In your times of prayer this week, take a few moments for the following:

1. Request that God gives you the wisdom to discern good teachers and leaders from bad ones.
2. Ask God that he helps you resist any temptation to use the gospel, your knowledge of the Bible, and your Christian faith for your own benefit or advancement.

Scripture Focus: God serves as both a model for how to minister to people and a contrast to bad leaders. Each day this week carefully and slowly read *Ezekiel 34:1-16*. Notice how God shepherds his people compared to how some of Israel's leaders shepherded the people. You may even want to read this passage alongside *Psalms 23*.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?