

## 1 THESSALONIANS

### DISCUSSION GUIDE 2

#### ABOUT THIS SERIES

What do you do when you're persecuted for being a Christian?

Seventeen years after the resurrection of Jesus, the persecution of Christians became hostile in a city called Thessalonica. As they lost their livelihood and lost their lives, the followers of Jesus naturally started to question if the faith was worth the cost.

To encourage them, the Apostle Paul wrote them a letter to give them hope and perspective to their persecution. Today, this letter is known in your Bible as "1 Thessalonians". More than a historical document, 1 Thessalonians gives perspective to all Christians as they endure any hardships or persecution.

Join St. Mark for the next five weeks and explore 1 Thessalonians, one verse at a time, and discover timeless truths to give you hope today.

#### ITEMS NEEDED

Bibles

#### CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

<input type="checkbox"/> Pray for your group	<input type="checkbox"/> Read through the Discussion Guide	<input type="checkbox"/> Refreshments (optional)
<input type="checkbox"/> Clean meeting area	<input type="checkbox"/> Clean bathroom	<input type="checkbox"/> Crack front door

#### OPENING (10 MIN)

*After a general welcome, say: For today's icebreaker, let's go around—*

#### WHAT'S A SONG OR POEM OR MOVIE SCENE THAT YOU CAN RECITE WORD-FOR-WORD? CAN YOU DO IT FOR US?

*After a brief discussion, say: There was a time you didn't know that thing verbatim, but it was important enough to you at one point in time you decided to learn it word-for-word. Today we're going to go through 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 word-for-word, we may not memorize it today, but we're doing so because it's important to us.*

But before we get into all of that, let's pray.

#### OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

*Host, lead the group in prayer, asking God to bless your time together.*

#### 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-7 (10 MIN)

Everyone turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 2.

#### CAN SOMEONE READ VERSES 1-7 ALOUD FOR US?

*After the reading, say:* Paul defends his ministry from 8 accusations of misusing ministry: error, impure motives, deception, hypocrisy, people-pleasing, flattery, greed, and domineering.

**WHICH ONE OF THOSE DO YOU THINK IS MOST-COMMON IN CHURCHES IN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY? OR WHICH ONE HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED?**

**WHAT IS THE LIFESTYLE ANTONYM OF THAT WORD? (FOR INSTANCE, THE RESPONSE TO GREED IS GENEROSITY.)**

After a discussion, say: in verse 4, Paul mentions the word “testing”. We see examples of this in Scripture in places like James 1:3, Deuteronomy 8:2, and Jeremiah 17:10. In general, there are three reasons to test something: to show what’s inside, to cleanse what’s inside, or to strengthen what’s inside.

**WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT A TESTING FROM GOD FOR YOU, WHAT COMES TO MIND?**

**FOR YOU, DID IT REVEAL WHAT WAS INSIDE, CLEANSE WHAT WAS INSIDE, OR STRENGTHEN WHAT WAS INSIDE?**

### **1 THESSALONIANS 2:8-12 (10 MIN)**

*After a discussion, say:* Let’s keep reading.

**CAN SOMEONE READ VERSES 8-12 ALOUD FOR THE GROUP?**

*After the reading, say:* Paul mentions three types of relationship he has with the Thessalonians—motherly, brotherly, and fatherly. Caring, laboring, and exhorting. Our relationship with God and with the church isn’t stagnant, sometimes we need to be nurtured, sometimes we need to be engaged, and sometimes we need to be exhorted.

**OF THOSE THREE THINGS—COMFORTED, ENGAGED, OR CHALLENGED—WHICH DO YOU NEED RIGHT NOW?**

### **1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-16 (10 MIN)**

*After a discussion, say:* Let’s keep reading.

**CAN SOMEONE READ VERSES 13-16 ALOUD FOR THE GROUP?**

*After the reading, say:* In this section, Paul tells the Thessalonians when they are persecuted, they are sharing in the sufferings of Jesus. A promise that we see throughout Scripture in places like 2 Timothy 3:12 or from Jesus himself in John 15:20.

Most likely, being personally persecuted for your faith in modern America is people avoiding you or saying harsh things about you. But to close our time together I want you to imagine you are a Christian in modern day Nigeria. The church in the village down the road was burned down last week by militants and the worshipers inside were shot. This has been going on for months, but it’s getting closer, and you are worried about whether you should go to church this weekend.

**CAN SOMEONE READ 1 PETER 4:12-14 ALOUD FOR US?**

**IF YOU WERE FEARING YOUR LIFE OR SAFETY BECAUSE OF YOUR FAITH IN JESUS,  
WHAT COMFORT WOULD THESE WORDS GIVE YOU?**

**CLOSING PRAYER (5 – 7 MIN)**

*After a discussion, say:* As we close our time in prayer today, we're going to also pray that God would protect and strengthen the persecuted church in places like Nigeria, North Korea, Syria, and Somalia.

**BUT FIRST, ARE THERE ANY OTHER PRAYER REQUESTS?**

*Host, after taking prayer requests, close the group in prayer.*