

## 1 THESSALONIANS

### DISCUSSION GUIDE 4

#### 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 More than a historical document, 1 Thessalonians gives perspective to all Christians as they endure any hardships or persecution.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:* Let's get this party started with an icebreaker—

#### **HAVE ANY OF YOU EVER BEEN OVERSEAS AND HAD A MOMENT WHEN A CULTURAL DIFFERENCE BECAME APPARENT?**

*After a brief discussion, say:* There are moments where we realize we're not like everyone around us. And today, as we continue our series through 1 Thessalonians, we're going to look at how Christians are called to be different than the world around them, and what that means for us, personally.

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 4:1-3A (10 MIN)

*After the prayer, say:* After Paul discusses his fear that the Thessalonians will walk away from their faith, he talks about his other fear that they will water down their faith. To which he tells them they should be different.

Let's get started with a framework for the rest of the chapter.

**CAN SOMEONE READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1 THROUGH THE FIRST HALF OF VERSE 3 ALOUD FOR US?**

*After the reading, say:* The word *sanctification* here is an important one to understand correctly. Sanctification is different than justification, but they both mean being set apart and different from the world around us. Sanctification is becoming holy, justification is being made holy. Sanctification is what we do for God, justification is what God does for us. Sanctification is a process (more and more), justification is a one-time event.

**I'LL CALL OUT SOMETHING, YOU TELL ME IF IT'S SANCTIFICATION OR JUSTIFICATION:**

**BE KIND**  
(Sanctification)

**PRAY CONTINUALLY**  
(Sanctification)

**JESUS DIED FOR YOU**  
(Sanctification)

**YOU ARE FORGIVEN**  
(Sanctification)

**CONFESS YOUR SINS**  
(Sanctification)

**HEAVEN IS YOUR HOME**  
(Justification)

This matters because as we read the rest of this chapter together, it's not a justification or salvation issue, it's a sanctification issue. So, if you're feeling convicted by these words, don't let yourself feel condemned—there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!

**1 THESSALONIANS 4:3B-8 (10 MIN)**

**CAN SOMEONE READ THE SECOND HALF OF VERSE 3 THROUGH VERSE 8 ALOUD FOR THE GROUP? AND CAN SOMEONE ELSE READ 1 CORINTHIANS 6:15-17 FOR US?**

*After the reading, say:* Remembering that sexuality was designed by God changes the way we approach the topic. But for the purposes of our conversation on “being different”, let's ask a simple question—

**HOW WOULD NON-CHRISTIAN PEOPLE YOU KNOW REACT TO THE IDEA THAT SEX UNITES YOUR SPIRIT AND BODY WITH ANOTHER PERSON?**

**HOST TIP:**

*If the conversation turns to controversial topics like homosexuality or divorce, redirect it to the question. There's another time to have that conversation and this could be a long or contentious tangent.*

**1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-12 (10 MIN)**

*After a discussion, say:* After telling the Thessalonians to be different with their sexuality, Paul tells them to be different with their conduct and lifestyle.

**CAN SOMEONE READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-12 ALOUD FOR US?**

*After the reading, say:* Paul tells the Thessalonians to not be gossipy, dramatic, hand wringers. To have a peace and conduct that makes people take notice because they're not caught up in the angst of the world around them and loving while the rest of the world is fighting.

**HOW DO YOU STAY BALANCED BETWEEN BEING ACTIVE AND INVOLVED IN SOCIETY WHILE NOT LETTING IT AFFECT YOUR WELLBEING?**

### 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-15 (10 MIN)

*After a discussion, say:* After telling the Thessalonians to be different with their conduct, Paul closes by telling them to be different in the way they grieve.

#### **CAN SOMEONE READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-15 ALOUD FOR US?**

**IF YOU'RE COMFORTABLE SHARING, HAVE YOU EVER ATTENDED A FUNERAL OF A LOVED ONE WHO HAD A FIRM AND PUBLIC FAITH IN JESUS, AND WHAT DID YOU OBSERVE ABOUT THE WAY PEOPLE GRIEVED? DID YOU SEE HOPE? WAS IT DIFFERENT THAN OTHER FUNERALS?**

### CLOSING PRAYER (5 – 7 MIN)

*After a discussion, say:* These are three ways Paul wanted to remind the Thessalonians—and us—that we are different because of the resurrection of Jesus. In our grief, because we know the hope of the resurrection. In our conduct, because we know the love of God in Christ. In our sexuality, because we know God. We'll close today with a prayer to be noticeably different than the world around us.

Speaking of prayer—

**ARE THERE ANY OTHER PRAYER REQUESTS?**

**IS THERE ANYONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO PRAY FOR US?**

*Close the group in prayer.*