

SERMON PRACTICES

Houses of Hope: A Study of 1 Thessalonians Week Four: Is Following Jesus Worth It?

Welcome, we're delighted you've chosen to dig more deeply into the Scriptures and consider what God has for you through this sermon. These sermon practices are ideally intended to be discussed with others, so find a friend, family member, or roommate to join you. If you haven't yet joined a life group yet, check out our website at vchurch.org/groups or stop at the Welcome Center for more info.

Getting Started

Before you start today's study, be sure you take a moment to sit quietly before the Lord, then have one person pray, asking the Holy Spirit to give you all deep insight into the Scriptures and the ability to receive his teaching and direction in your time together.

Exploring Scripture: Thessalonica's Example

Read aloud Thessalonians 2:13 - 3:13

Today's scripture reading is longer than usual, so get comfortable. Share the reading between a few in your group and read out loud starting at first Thessalonians 2:13 and continue all the way through chapter 3.

- Pause after each paragraph and summarize that section in your own words
- The believers in Thessalonica suffered significantly for following Jesus. As best you can tell, why do you think some people are so threatened by Jesus and his followers?

Reflection: The Weight of Following

- Have you ever experienced tension, rejection, or persecution for being a Christ Follower?
- Do you hide your faith from those who don't trust Jesus? (No shame intended; remember, there are no perfect people allowed at our church!) If so, what experiences are you trying to avoid?

Exploring Scripture: Paul's Prayers of Blessing

You may recall that Paul and his companions had been chased out of Thessalonica, and wanted desperately to return to visit them to see if their faith had stayed strong through all the persecution. After Timothy's solo visit, Paul was ecstatic to hear they had remained strong in the lord. In response, Paul prayed three specific prayers found in the last three verses of chapter 3.

- Rewrite those prayers three on your own and then share your paraphrase with each other.
- Which one feels the most meaningful and/or encouraging to you?

Reflection: Loving Like the Thessalonians

Paul commended these young believers for imitating Christ so well. They loved people so well, even though they were persecuted for modeling such love. In this passage, we learn the principle that loving, like Jesus, is worth the suffering.

- Who is more of a challenge for you to love well: church people or churchless people?
- What stood out to you in the sermon on this passage?

Wrapping Up

Choose one person you are going to love better this week and ask God to pour His love deep into your heart and help you to love like Him. Before you each pray aloud, pray in silence and ask the Lord to bring to mind how he wants you to interact with the challenging person you have chosen to love better. After these moments of silence, pray aloud for yourself and the others in your discussion.