**Community Group Discussion Guide**

**1 Thessalonians 3:6-13**

**Sermon Overview:** This sermon will emphasize how God calls us to have encouraging faith during difficult times.

*Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13*

*Set the context…*

**Context:** In Acts 17, Paul comes to a Greek city, Thessalonica, where he proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ who suffered and rose from the dead to Jews in the synagogue. Luke, the author of Acts, tells us that some were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas (Acts 17:4). However, some were not so persuaded but grew jealous and caused a great uproar in the city of Thessalonica, and they “***attacked the house of Jason***,” and “***they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities***.” (Acts 17:5-6) They accused Jason and those preaching the gospel in the synagogue as those who “***turned the world upside down,” and “acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus***.” (Acts 17:7) Paul and those with him had to flee from the city of Thessalonica due to persecution, and from his proclamation of the gospel and his labor, a large number of Greeks and Jews formed the Church of Thessalonica. Because Paul fled and could not come back, he had sent Timothy to find out how the church was doing in the midst of their persecution and report back to him. What Paul found was that they not only were doing well, but they were flourishing spiritually in faith and love for one another. This brought him great joy. Paul now writes the Thessalonians on this report of encouraging faith.

**Commentary:** Timothy’s report on the Thessalonians is good news about their strong faith and love. (3:6) The Thessalonians remember Paul and those who were with him kindly, and they longed to see Paul again, just as Paul longed to see them. Paul writes to them that he has been comforted, even as he faces his own afflictions, by their faith. (3:7) There is nothing more encouraging to a pastor than to know that the flock of God that he shepherds is healthy and in pursuit of Christ. So now Paul encourages the Church at Thessalonica to stand fast in the Lord (3:10), and he expresses again the reason why he wants to return to them so that he may see them “***face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?”*** The word used here for “lacking” may also be taken as “poverty.” So, Paul is not so much saying they are missing something, but that he wants to spurn them onto greater, richer maturity in what they are already doing. He wanted to do this himself, which he did not have the chance to do as his time with them was cut short.

Paul again transitions into prayer that God his Father and the Lord Jesus Christ would direct their way to the Thessalonians. (3:11) Not only that, but even in Paul’s absence he prays that the Lord would make them increase and abound in love for each other and for everyone. (3:12) Paul believes the fundamental truth of sanctification that it is God who works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit to remain faithful to the commands of Christ. In prayer Paul affirms that, because of the complete work of Jesus, the hearts of his people can be established and found blameless in holiness before God as they look forward to the return of Jesus “with all the saints.” (3:13) This assurance comes not from our faithfulness, but the faithfulness of Jesus on our behalf. This is the good news of the gospel message.

*Share main truths of the passage along with the verses that teach them and discuss how to apply to our daily lives…*

**Key points:
-** Comforting news of strong faith(v.6-7)
- Call to remain steadfast in the Lord (v. 8-10)
- Prayer for God to establish in love and holiness (v. 11-13)

**Discussion and** **Application Questions:**

Verses 6-7

1. Timothy here reports to Paul about the Thessalonian’s faith and love. Is there anyone in your life that observes your faith and love? How could you create space for that to happen?
2. Can you think of someone in the church who has demonstrated faith in a way that has encouraged you?

3. In what ways can you exercise the kind of faith that would be encouraging to others?
4. If faith in lacking in your life, what are things you can be doing to fuel your faith?
5. Is God calling you to any specific areas of faith that you are struggling to obey in?
6. How can you demonstrate faith in mission this week?

Verses 8-10

Paul in 3:10 desires to see the Thessalonians go on to be fully mature believers; this is what the Bible elsewhere calls discipleship. Here at Highview we define discipleship as a life-on-life relationship teaching others to know and follow Jesus with the expectation of replication.

7. How are you taking part in discipleship here at Highview? What steps can you take to be more engaged with discipleship?

8. Is there anything lacking in your faith? How can you lean into brothers and sisters in the church to ask for help to grow in that area?
9. Steadfastness and maturity are a result of previous effort. Are there changes you can make in your pursuit of Christ to build steadfastness?
10.Paul shares with the Thessalonians that he is praying for them day and night. Who is there in your life who you pray for without ceasing? Your kids? Your D-Group? Those in your Community Group? Family?

11. Paul writes a letter to stay in contact with the Thessalonians. What can you do in our time of social distancing to stay in contact with your Community Group or other brothers and sisters?

Verses 11-13

12. Paul’s prayer reveals that everything is being controlled and empowered by God. How does this view impact your prayer life?

13.At Highview, Love is a key component to our Community Groups. Is your love for your brothers and sisters your Community Group increasing? Why or why not?

14. What would abounding love for others look like during this time?

15. How does the gospel establish our hearts in holiness?

16. How are you currently growing in holiness and seeking to have a heart that is blameless before our God and the Lord Jesus Christ?

*Share a key take away or challenge for the week…*

*Pray together in light of 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13*

**Prayer Guide:**

Pray for our church; that we would abound in love for one another day after day. Pray for your Community Group, that you would practically love one another and be encouraged by each other’s faith.

Pray for our city that we might be intentional to demonstrate faith to preach the gospel day after day and that we might see many join the church as we seek to turn the world upside down. Pray that faith in the person and work of Jesus would be contagious.

Pray for our world that missionaries like Paul might go out to build up churches where discipleship takes place.