

# Called Up

## 1 Thessalonians 1- Session #1

### Small Group Notes

#### **Introduction:**

What are things that someone is known for quitting? What generally are the reasons that someone quits something?

What are habits that you see in your life that will never change? Why? What are the benefits? What can be the draw backs of that habit continuing?

Is there a spiritual habit that has become a valuable part of your life? What is it? When did it begin? What are ways that you make margin to be sure the habit continues?

Just as there are things that can be easy to quit, there are also reasons to consider why habits begin. When we consider spiritual habits, we have to be sure that they are driven by the Word of God as well as helping us to become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's movement in our lives. To not have spiritual habits that have a balance between being rooted in God's Word and focused on dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit can lead us to over-emphasizing one to the detriment of the other.

Before digging into 1 Thessalonians, we encourage you to read Acts 16-17 as a way to see the way God used Paul to reach the people of Thessalonica and the varying responses to the gospel.

#### **Discuss:**

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-4

When Paul prayed, he constantly and intentionally included these new believers. In verse 3, Paul stated the basis for his thanksgiving: the evidence of salvation they demonstrated. Paul remembered their visible deeds in the face of difficulty. Such endurance or persistence arose because of the rock-solid object they placed their hope in: our Lord Jesus Christ.

We may not have people writing us letters to tell us they thank God for the evidence of His work in our lives. But like the Thessalonians, we are to be people who demonstrate authentic Christianity. Good works and endurance never go out of style for Christians. Neither do faith, hope, and love. We are to seek to be the kind of people for whom others, whenever they think of us, want to thank God.

**What characteristics of Paul's prayer in verses 1-4 stand out to you?**

**How do these characteristics of Paul's prayer contrast with the ways many Christians pray today (weak, occasional, mechanical, inattentive, and so forth)?**

**What evidence of work produced by faith and labor produced by love will others find if they examine your life? How recently have you thanked God for these traits in the lives of others?**

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6

An oral gospel witness will be more compelling when accompanied by a lifestyle witness. This was Paul's approach to ministry—the gospel message fused with a lifestyle of gospel living. The Thessalonians had recognized Paul as a positive role model whom they intentionally imitated. They also had set about imitating the Lord, whom Paul himself sought to be like (1 Cor. 11:1).

**How did the Thessalonians first become imitators of, and then models for, the faith? What does this tell you about their growth in Christ since Paul was only present with them for what is understood to be three weeks?**

**The Thessalonians could see that what Paul, Silas, and Timothy were preaching was true because these men lived it. If they contradicted what was taught then, what could have been the consequences. How can our lives confirm or contradict what we say we believe? What does this teach us about living consistently for Christ?**

**The Thessalonians grew in their faith through persecution and were even able to delight in what the Holy Spirit was doing (v. 6). Typically, how do you respond in times of suffering? What are some practical**

**ways we can express joy and gratitude for the Spirit's work in our lives?**

**3. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10**

The story of the Thessalonians' life-changing encounter now had come full circle. First, the message had gone out from them to "every place" (v. 8). Second, believers from these places had brought a report to Paul—now in Corinth—about the kind of reception Paul had received in Thessalonica. Third, Paul then wrote back to the Thessalonians about the good things others had been saying about them. No doubt he meant this to provide them with encouragement to continue steadfastly in their faith.

**Think about the influence our church and its members have had in the last year. Could we say that people around our lives each day are talking about our Christian example? What does this say about the example of our church compared to that of the Thessalonians?**

**Which of the qualities of the Thessalonians do you most wish to see developed in your life now? How can the group help? How can this help you to be a better model for Christ that others see?**

**Paul focused the reason to not quit and keep being an example was because of the second coming of Jesus. How does knowing that through all of life we aren't waiting for a solution, rather for a Person (Jesus Christ), help us to go through hard moments?**