



LEADERS NOTES

Kingdom Battle

1 Thessalonians 3

1. If you're brave, share one of the most embarrassing things you've done in public.

Hey Life Group Leaders! You are now in Week 4 of our new Life Group Video Series, "Kingdom of God" as we study through the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians! We hope that this series will be uplifting, challenging, and help you find your next step in your journey with God!

This week, you have nine questions coming up based the video lesson this week! Remember that these Leader Notes are to serve as a guide for further and deepening conversation with your Life Group, not as the answers! Enjoy this week's discussion and always remember to ask an extra question such as "Why do you believe that?" to draw out some more conversation from your group members!

To start off this lesson, we have a personal question that everyone should be able to answer. This can be a fun question to answer, but some may be embarrassed and do not feel that they have a good story to share. It may help if you, as the leader, are transparent and willing to share. This process of sharing can be an incredibly helpful way to learn more about the people in your group. Once again, please make sure that your group feels the safety of sharing within the group. No snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 3. Identify 2-3 themes in this chapter, share where you see the themes in the chapter, and how—if at all—you notice these themes chapters 1-2.

1 Thessalonians 3 reads, "So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.

But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones."

Some themes of chapter 3 may include that Paul still longed to visit the people again. he was worried for their spiritual health and growth. Paul encourages the church to continue to stand firm through

persecution and live God honoring, holy, and blameless lives.

For the second part of this question, some answers may include that there are very similar themes found in the beginning of this letter. Paul wants the church members to know what they've been taught and stay true to the teachings in following the Lord Jesus Christ. He lets them know they've been doing a good job and he encourages them to continue. He reminds them of his teachings as he was approved and entrusted to share the gospel message with them and warns not to stray, but to stay the course. This is God honoring and holy living.

3. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3 and James 1:2-4. Why is it necessary for our faith to be tested? How have trials strengthened your faith?

1 Thessalonians 3:1-3 reads, "So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them."

James 1:2-4 reads, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Some answers may include that Christians should not be shaken by persecution, because Paul stated we are appointed to this in God's plan. Jesus taught his disciples that if people persecuted him, they as his followers would be persecuted as well (John 15:20). In Paul's case the persecutions kept him moving from city to city. As a result, many cities were able to hear the gospel from Paul's mouth. This would not have happened had Paul been warmly received among the Jews. Hence, God allowed persecution to serve as a means of accomplishing his will. Some people turn to God with the hope of escaping suffering on earth. But God doesn't promise that. Instead, he gives us power to grow through our sufferings. The Christian life involved obedience to Christ despite temptations and hardships. The phrase "whenever you experience various trials" (James 1:2) assumes that trials are a normal part of the Christian life. In fact, trials are a given for a faithful disciple (2 Timothy 3:12). Experiencing problems and persecutions can build character (James 1:2-4), perseverance (Romans 5:3-5), and sensitivity toward others who also face trouble (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). Problems are unavoidable for God's people. Your troubles may actually be a sign of effective Christian living.

The second part of this question is one that everyone has the opportunity to answer. Some may struggle and do not feel that they have a good story to share. Once again, it may help if you, as the leader, are transparent and willing to share. This process of sharing can be an incredibly helpful way to learn more about the people in your group. Please make sure that your group feels the safety of sharing within the group; no snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, remember to show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

4. Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:8 that, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." How are you learning to resist temptation?

This is a question that most people in your group should be able to answer to some degree. For some context and background, from this verse in 1 Peter, we learn that the devil can be like a lion. Lions attack sick, young, or straggling animals; they choose victims who are alone or not alert. Peter warns us to watch out for Satan when we are suffering or being persecuted. Feeling alone, weak, helpless, and cut off from others believers, so focused on our troubles that we forget to watch for danger, we are especially vulnerable to Satan's attacks. During times of suffering, seek other Christians for support, as you are doing in your Life Group! Keep your eyes on Christ, and resist the devil. Then, writes James, "he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

5. In the video, Brian said that when facing a trial, many of us ask, "Why me?" However, he tries to ask, "Why not me?" Why is Brian's question healthier to ask? How does his question help our perspective?

This is a question that everyone has asked themselves or God at some point in their lives. Probably because you have become fed up with the amount of adversity you've sustained in a period of time. Encourage honesty from your group members as they share. Some answers may include that both Peter and Jude warn that we can expect opposition not only from our broader cultural context, but also from powerful, personal forces of evil that seek to deflect and deface God's purposes in our lives. In 1 Peter 5:8, Peter exhorts us to discipline ourselves, in this case, by keeping alert to the wiles of the devil. Just as Peter had earlier encouraged his readers to not be intimidated by the oppositions of the world around them (1 Peter 1:13 and 4:7), so here he pictures the devil as a "roaring lion" bent on frightening his opponents into submission. Here, however, submission is never an option. Struggle and stiff resistance are called for as we stand against the crafty schemes of the evil one. In reality though, it is Christ himself who fights on our behalf as we place our faith in him. Indeed, he has already won the final victory in his death and resurrection. His devoted followers are now engaged in a mopping up operation. Costly sacrifices will be necessary, casualties suffered, and at times even resistance unto death required. In Christ, however, suffering and death are never the last word.

6. Because Paul suddenly left the Thessalonians (2:17) and didn't get to mentor/teach them for very long, he feared they were easy prey for temptations (vs. 5). What temptations do new believers face after becoming Christians? What temptations did you experience after following Jesus?

1 Thessalonians 2:17 reads, "But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you."

1 Thessalonians 3:5 reads, "For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain."

Some answers may include that temptations come in all sorts of ways. When Jesus was tempted (Matthew 4:1-10), the devil used real needs and possible doubts in looking for potential weaknesses to exploit. Jesus had a physical need of hunger, an emotional need of security, and psychological needs of significance, power, and achievement. Satan was trying to plant doubts by questioning

whether or not God would supply food; would God protect; would God rule? He was looking for weaknesses in Jesus like hunger, impatience, need to prove himself, pride, insecurity, need to test God, desire for quick power, easy solutions, need to prove greater worth, etc. How do these temptations compare to what you have faced?

7. In 1 Thessalonians 3:5-7, Paul is concerned for the Thessalonians' faith, but is overjoyed when he learns they are spiritually strong. Can you think of a new Christian that matured in faith despite your concern for them? If so, please share.

1 Thessalonians 3:5-7 reads, "For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain. But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith."

This is another question that everyone has the opportunity to answer. Some may struggle and do not feel that they have a good story to share. Once again, it may help if you, as the leader, are transparent and willing to share. Some answers may include that it brings joy to a Christian to see another person come to faith in Christ and mature in that faith. Paul experienced this joy countless times. He thanked God for those who had come to know Christ for their strong faith. He also prayed for their continued growth. If there are new Christians who have brought you joy, thank God for them and support them as they continue to grow in the faith.

8. In 1 Thessalonians 3:9-10, what does Paul mean when he writes about wanting to supply what's lacking in their faith??

1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 reads, "How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith."

Some answers may include that Paul was praying to see the Thessalonian believers in person in order to complete what was lacking in their faith. Since the missionaries had to leave so suddenly (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 and Acts 17:1-10), they did not complete their instruction to the Thessalonians in their new faith. Thus, some elements and teaching were lacking – especially concerning Jesus' resurrection and the second coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Since Paul was not able to personally return, he used this letter to address those matters (1 Thessalonians 4:11-5:22). The prayer's request that the church overflow with love for one another and be blameless in holiness is addressed in detail in the following two paragraphs (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12).

9. Read Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; and 1 Thessalonians 3:12. According to Paul, spiritual maturity is found loving everyone. Looking at your life, how have you developed a growing love for everyone?

Romans 13:8-10 reads, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one

another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Galatians 5:14 reads, "For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

1 Thessalonians 3:12 reads, "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you."

This is another good question that is pretty personal that everyone should be able to answer. This may be kind of tough to answer as some may be embarrassed that they don't feel like that have developed love for other people. It may help if you, as the leader, are transparent and willing to share. Once again, please make sure that your group feels the safety of sharing within the group. No snap judgments or quick fixes. And as always, be encouraging and show grace as your group members are working through their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

Remember to ask for prayer requests and close your group in prayer. Encourage one another to take steps, regardless of how small, toward Jesus and his kingdom.