

The Vine

Week One:

October 5-11, 2008

I look like my dad. People who know my dad will say, "You must be Tom's son." It is the way we walk; it's the way we talk. An interesting thing happens these days. I will hold my kids and others will say, "She sure looks like you." Certain traits have been handed down and my kids are like me in many ways.

The same thing happens spiritually. Traits are passed down to those on whom we have spiritual influence. What traits have been handed down to you spiritually? What have you passed on? What do you want your spiritual heritage to be? One of the last questions in this Vine will be, "What do people say about you?" So as you work through The Vine this week, keep that in mind.

Day One

For your personal time with the Lord, swiftly read through 1 Thessalonians (it's only five chapters) for an overview. We realize this is a whole book of the Bible, so stretch yourself and go for it. You can do it! We will focus on chapter 1 for the rest of the week, but for today, allow the Lord to show you the book's overall themes. Which theme sticks out to you? It may be the thankfulness Paul, Silas, & Timothy express for the church at Thessalonica and why they are so grateful. It may be a newfound appreciation for these exemplary early-day Christians. It may be a fresh awakening to praying for and loving one another in the congregation.

Which theme stuck out to you the most? Spend a few moments praying about why that item was brought to your mind.

Background

The apostle Paul spent time in Thessalonica and started the church there. If you wish to dig into this, look at Acts 17:1-9. This was part of one of his three major missionary journeys.

If you wish to dig in even more, skim the surrounding chapters in Acts 16 to 19. This will give you an overview of the different types of responses that Paul received.

(Remember, sometime the Lord meets you in a powerful way when you give Him space to speak. Sometimes it does not work that way, but we must learn to be fine with that. The more we give Him a chance to speak, the more we will be sensitive to hear His gentle voice.)



Map used from <http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/JBPhillips.htm>

Day Two

Slowly read through 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1 and observe how Paul, Silas and Timothy see the Thessalonian church.



Then read it through a second time to observe how the church in Thessalonica lived. What are some action words and phrases that detail the changes in their lives?

Inductive Bible Study Tip: Observation

This is step one in the Inductive Study Method. This is where we seek to understand the structure and facts of the passage we are reading. By asking questions we are better able to anticipate and comprehend what is written. This step cannot be rushed. Observation will have a profound impact on the upcoming steps.

Sample observation questions to ponder:

- 1) Who is writing and to whom? (We quickly find out Paul, Sila, and Timothy are writing to the Thessalonian church)
- 2) When and where does this take place? (Where is Paul? How long has it been since he has seen the congregation?)
- 3) What words and phrases are repeated frequently in the passage?
- 4) What contrasts do we find?

As you do more and more Bible study, you will find it more natural to ask good questions. What other questions do you have for chapter 1?

Who has been like Paul for you? (Who has invested in your spiritual life?)

Prayer Reflection: Pray for those who have shared the gospel with you. Pray for those who have encouraged you in the faith. Consider calling them or writing them a note today. Ask God to give to you a thankful heart like Paul, Silas, and Timothy for the church.

Day Three

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5. Now read 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10. What shift happens between these two sections of scripture?

What evidence of transformation exists in the Thessalonian church?

What seems to be Paul's attitude toward suffering? How did the Thessalonians respond to suffering?

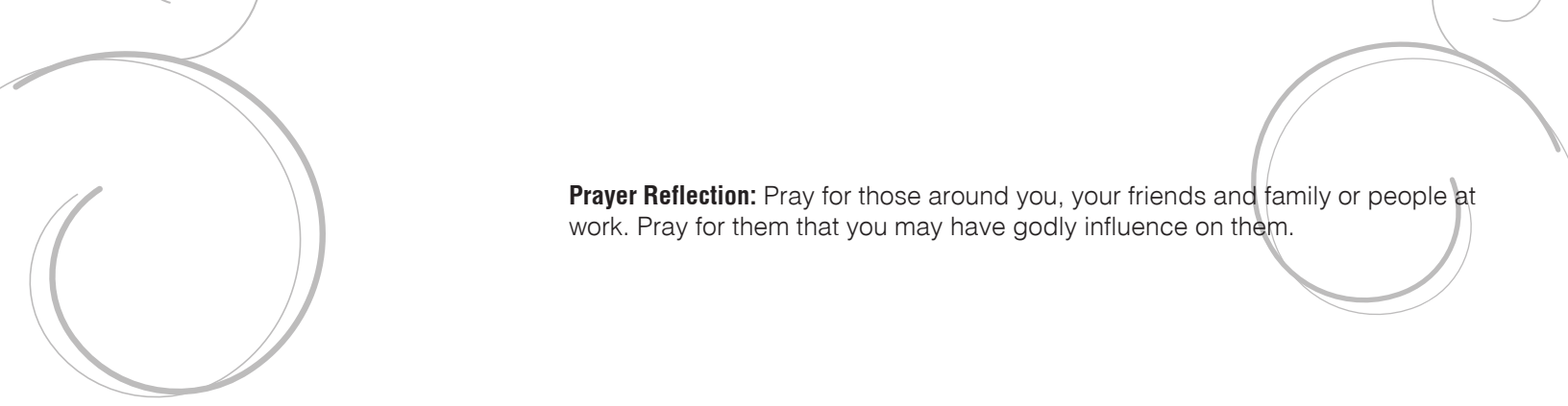
What would it look like if someone were walking after you? Being "imitators" of you? Does it make you walk differently? How so? Do you welcome it or wish they would imitate someone else? Why is this?

Faith, Hope & Love

You know of the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but do you know about the Trinity within you? In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul writes about Faith, Hope and Love focusing on the most important virtue of the three; love. He writes that a person with the gift of prophecy and deep faith are nothing without love, that speech without love is just noise and that sacrifice has no virtue without love. Love is difficult to describe but the apostle gives a list of attributes in 1 Corinthians 13.

Paul notes that of faith, hope and love the "greatest of these is love." Love alone is the fulfillment of the law and the image of God in the heart and soul. Love has the widest influence and overcomes more evil. Faith and hope are personal, but love is the fabric that binds the justified together with God in his kingdom.





Prayer Reflection: Pray for those around you, your friends and family or people at work. Pray for them that you may have godly influence on them.

Day Four

Read through 1 Thessalonians slowly, asking God to reveal how the lives of the Thessalonians impacted their neighbor churches. In these verses what are some action words and phrases that detail the changes in their lives?

What did it mean for the Thessalonians to “turn from idols?” What else was involved in their turning away from the idols? What did turning toward God mean for them? Now think about these same ideas for yourself. What it look like practically for you to turn from things you hold as idols? In real terms, what does it mean for you to turn to the living God?

How were the members of the church waiting? How are you waiting?



(Too often we only do Bible study with our head. Be sure to spend time leaning back in your chair, meditating on certain questions. Say out loud, if no one is around, "Lord, how do you want me to wait for you?" This idea of giving God space to speak might be new for you. That's okay. Trust Him. Crawl into His lap and ask Him to help you understand.)

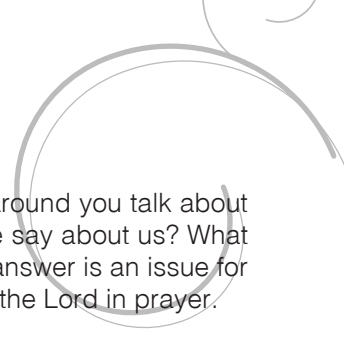

How do you think Paul, Silas and Timothy felt when they saw the influence they had on the Thessalonians?

Prayer Reflection: The Word of God had a transformational effect on the Thessalonians. They were changed from within, which brought about a radical outward shift. Find verses in 1 Thessalonians 1 to use to pray God's Word for your own life. One possible prayer might be, "Thank you, God for loving me and choosing me. May my walk reflect that your gospel in my life is not just words, but power with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. May I be an imitator of Jesus my Lord, welcoming your message with joy."

Day Five

Read 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 slowly, stopping and reflecting on any verse you wish.






What do people say about you? Personally, when people around you talk about your faith, what do they say? As a church, what do people say about us? What part of your answer can you celebrate? What part of your answer is an issue for prayer and improvement? Take a moment and lift these to the Lord in prayer.

How are you going to act upon your discoveries from your time in this chapter? Be as specific as you can.

How do these truths change the way you think? Again, be as specific as you can.

Prayer Reflection: Spend some time praying for the Lord to guide your response to the chapter. After prayer and listening to the Lord, make some firm commitments about what you have heard from Him.



Written by The Vine Team.
Send an e-mail to thevine@kcconline.org with comments or questions. We would love to hear what you think about it. If you have a heart to help create The Vine, let us know that you are interested in joining the team.

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