

# MORE: Jesus from beginning to end.

## a study of 1 Thessalonians

Series Intro "MORE: Jesus from beginning to end" is a study of First Thessalonians to see MORE Jesus IN you. **God is working through the gospel of Jesus Christ for more in your life. To know Jesus is to long for more of Him. Are you longing for more Jesus in your life?**

TRANS We are asking....

### What is More? 1 Thess 2:1-3:13

**MPS:** God leads by the gospel to produce more fruitfulness, persevere in obedience and delight in gospel glory.  
**OBJ:** Every person can understand how grace produces evidence of God's MORE in life by five gospel trajectories.

INTRO We began by asking the question, "How do you identify or measure "more"?" MORE in relationship with God or spiritual growth can seem subjective, be hard to define or frustrating. But evidence for God doing MORE in you is not unknowable. God wants us to KNOW, by godly discernment, what more means and to experience the MORE He has for your life through the gospel of Jesus Christ!

ILLUS I shared last week how, in my experience as a pastor, the vast majority of the time when people explain the reasoning for a decision they explain it this way, "I just feel like...". Many people make spiritual decisions that significantly affect their life simply by nothing more than a "feeling". **Emotions and feelings alone are NEVER spiritual markers for discernment, but spiritual thermometers that indicate the need for discernment.**

**Grace produces tangible evidence of God's MORE in a person's life as they live by faith to follow Jesus.**

**Paul writes with deep love and affection for the Thessalonians.** As he describes his ministry while among them, he tells what they did and why. He also repeatedly shares his desire for the church by reminding them of all that God wants to see and do among them. Paul shows how the gospel worked to produce more to exhort the Thessalonians to look forward, to look to the MORE God is doing among them.

TRANS From Paul's exhortation we began looking at **[Series OBJ] Five Trajectories that evidence God's grace producing more in you.** Last week we saw how **God nurtures us in love by the gospel for MORE in all of life, and...**

#### 1. **a humble conviction that produces deep affection** 2:1-8

We qualified Trajectory #1 by saying that a humble conviction of Jesus Christ leads one to a test their own heart motivations and actions when confronted by opposition and suffering. This brings a clearer understanding of God's call to move forward with steadfast in compassion. As we do this the Lord grows deep love and desire for those among whom we labor. **In this first trajectory we see evidence of God's grace producing more when we are nurtured from humble conviction to desirous affection for the One whom we serve and those to whom we are sent.**

TRANS Today we will look at Trajectories #2, 3 and 4 to see...

**God leads by the gospel to produce more fruitfulness, persevere in obedience and delight in gospel glory.**

#### #2. **a faithfulness that produces fruitfulness in life** **READ** 1 Thes 2:9-12

<sup>9</sup> For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. <sup>10</sup> You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. <sup>11</sup> For you know how, like a father with his children, <sup>12</sup> we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.



Paul and his companions worked to support themselves as they ministered because they wanted nothing to stand in the way of people accepting the gospel. And he says to them that they witnessed how they lived among the people, *holy and righteous and blameless*. This was an intentional strategy. Using the metaphor of a father with his children, Paul says they exhorted, encouraged and charged the people to walk in a manner worthy of the One, God, who has called you.

**Paul's point is not how hard or much they worked but WHY they worked.** They were serving the gospel so others could hear and would believe. By the example of their life and the practice of exhorting, encouraging and charging the people, they led the people beyond only ritual to live in such a way that demonstrates God's glory. *They served the gospel in faithfulness so that their labors could produce gospel fruit.*

**A father leads by the model of life he lives.** This is the analogy Paul uses. A father exhorts to instruct in right standards, principles and practices by which to live. Their encouragement says to the child, "You can do this! You will do this." And their charge, "Go do this." And with all they say, the "this" they point to is the life dad is living, the example they set. *Dad, you will never speak louder or with more influentially with words than the life you live.*

Paul labored to lead people, NOT simply to bend them to conform to religious ritual with outward actions. The gospel is the power of life that produces. Paul lived by his talk and walk to lead people in a faithful practice that produced the fruit of God's glory in their life. Paul practiced faithfulness among the people to produce the fruit of the gospel among them.

**TRANS** Faithfulness is an important first lesson and critical practice for every Christian, but its not the last step.

I have really good news for some of you today. God NEVER measures your worth or value by your deeds, no matter how good nor how many they may be. And I have some really bad news for others of you today. God NEVER measures your worth or value by your deeds, no matter how good nor how many they may be. *God redeems your life through Jesus to walk in faithfulness in order to produce spiritual fruit and bear the glory of His Name.*

### **Performing tasks vs. producing fruit**

**ILLUS** We laugh about "participation trophies" but how quickly we default to this mindset in the Christian life. "I read my Bible. I pray. I do good." Good! No, GREAT! It is critical for the Christian to be IN God's Word, reading, studying, meditating, memorizing and knowing God's Word. But faithfulness in all these practices have one aim, godliness in all of life.

Jesus taught, "*On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast our demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me.'*" (Matt 7:22-23)

The "practices" of faithfulness in the Christian life are essential to form the "branch" through which life in Jesus can flow to us. But true life in Jesus always produces the fruit of holiness, righteousness and godliness that "hangs" for many to see and enjoy. Knowing Jesus motivates faithfulness in practices, but not for the sake of those practices. Faithfulness leads to life flowing to and through us that fruit of our life might display God's glory. *Faithfulness demonstrates itself through practices but fruitfulness only flows through relationship.*

Don't settle, Christian, to be satisfied with faithful performance. Press toward fruitfulness with your life. Let the faithfulness of your practice continue steadfastly until the fruit of godliness is born out from your life. It can be hard because it can seem to take a LOT of faithfulness, at times, to produce the smallest amount of fruit. Remain steadfast until the fruit comes, because godliness of life shouts that Jesus is glorious and worthy of all! *The difficulty of faithfulness is always outdone in every way by the fruitfulness of godliness from Jesus, to enjoy and share. And to the one who remains faithful unto fruitfulness, God gives more.*



God leads you to more as you walk in a manner worthy of His name to produce spiritual fruit in every area of your life.

### 3. a receptiveness to God's Word that produces perseverance in obedience. READ 1 Thess 2:13-16

<sup>13</sup>And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. <sup>14</sup>For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, <sup>15</sup>who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind <sup>16</sup>by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!

The Thessalonians received Paul and his companions, and their message. Paul says this was far more than only kindness, but faith because they received it as God's Word. The way the Thessalonians received God's Word was the reason God was able to work among them. They received the word by faith AS God's word, and it was Word working in and among them. God's Word is powerful to bring forth God's work when it is received by faith as God's Word.

How do you receive God's Word as you read, study or hear it preached? Faith unlocks the power of God's Word for your life. God's Word takes root in you when received by faith to become strength for you. Roots grad hold to stabilize. But they also grow deep to draw a steady supply for the whole tree. When the Word of God is deeply rooted in you, it holds you steady and supplies the strength you need in many ways; intellectually (Psa 119:130), emotionally (Psa 119:114, 162), spiritually (Psa 12:6-7; 119:9, 11), soulfully (Psa 119:25; 81), practically (Psa 17:4; 119:105), and comprehensively.

**You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Isaiah 26:3**

When the Word does not seem to be working in or for you, start by asking yourself, "Am I trusting God's Word?" When you receive God's Word by faith you receive God the Son, Jesus Christ, and His work in you. When you receive God's Word by faith it strengthens you for whatever you face so that you can persevere in obedience while God brings about His will IN you and THROUGH you. The Thessalonians proved the faithfulness of God through His Word, to accomplish the purpose for which He sent it. (Isa 55:11) When you receive God's Word by faith, you persevere in His work because He is working in you.

Are you learning to receive God's Word by faith so you can persevere in obedience, trusting in what He says to you, depending on it in the face of what is pressing against you? Do you need a Word from God today for some area or situation of life? Are you looking to God's Word for that word? Are you ready to believe so you can obey?

When God's Word is received by faith it produces more to strengthen one to persevere in obedience.

### 4. a sacrifice of obedience that delights in the joy of gospel glory. READ 1 Thess 2:17-3:5

<sup>17</sup>But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, <sup>18</sup>because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. <sup>19</sup>For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? <sup>20</sup>For you are our glory and joy.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone,<sup>2</sup> and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, <sup>3</sup>that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. <sup>4</sup>For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. <sup>5</sup>For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

Before he was ready to leave, Paul was "torn away" by threat and opposition. He knew the right thing to do was to leave Thessalonica but he didn't like it. God uses His people to accomplish His purposes. This is His plan. But sometimes the very



people He uses He removes to continue His work. Sometimes the way He begins a work is not the way He continues a work. [When we persevere in obedience we can be certain that any sacrifice we must make will produce greater delight in the joy we receive from God for His glory.](#)

### **ILLUS Ministry Assignments**

Christin and I have enjoyed so many rich and rewarding relationships at the churches we've been blessed to serve among. It was very hard to leave those places because of all the good God did while we were there. But when the Lord leads on it becomes wrong to stay. Many from those churches we still regularly communicate with today as dear friends. But each time we've left at God's leading we have learned how quickly and deeply He delights us in His Will.

Obedying the Lord can be one of the most difficult challenges of life. What may seem in the moment the most difficult "tearing away" can become the greatest glory and deepest joy. This is true for all God's children. We often hold this idea that when something begins to work we shouldn't mess with it. But just because God used us to start or strengthen it doesn't mean He can't do it without us. How quickly what starts as a big challenge becomes a comfort to cling to. [Christians should be people who live fully in the moment, but never hallow the moment to hold over God's head to get our own way.](#)

As we live in obedience to the Lord sacrifices will be required of us. Romans 12:2 reminds us that our spiritual worship is to live as living sacrifices. As we walk with Jesus in this way, we may not long for or even like some of the sacrifices we must make, but we do learn to accept them without whining and complaining, throwing selfish tantrums and demanding our way. Rather, our longing for more Jesus grows a trust in Him that teaches us to grieve deeply, even as we love deeply, knowing that our hope is not lost because His joy will be greater than our grief or sacrifice.

**ILLUS** [Have you ever pondered the blessing of grieving?](#) I propose to you that grieving is as much an expression of love and trust in the face of loss or change as delight in receiving or growing. When loss or change occurs, many fall into the cave of anger, get entangled in the net of bitterness, or even worse, get stuck in the quicksand of self-pity. Grief and delight both express our secure faith and hope in God's love to produce increasing joy in Jesus. [Longing for more Jesus leads us to accept the sacrifices He leads us to make to receive the far greater joy He brings.](#)

[Do you get hung-up on what you give up, what you lose, or the joy and glory of all that God brings through the sacrifice?](#)

[God leads you to more when you embrace the sacrifice of obedience to delight in the joy of His glory.](#)

[God leads by the gospel to produce more fruitfulness, persevere in obedience and delight in gospel glory.](#)

[Where are you on these trajectories, Christian? Are you moving forward by faith?](#)

