



## NG Study Guide: 1 Th. 2:1-12 “Be Encouraged” [9.30.18]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.

### The Study

**Thesis:** The Word of God reminds us that trial and affliction are part of being a follower of Christ. How are we to face the difficulties that seem to be ever-present? Paul reminds us that the Lord has called us to be encouraged and encourage those around us. We do this by being established in our faith in Jesus, and seeking to be used by God to establish others in their faith.

#### I. What we Need Encouragement in (Being Established in Our Faith) [1-2]

*1 Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, 2 and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith,*

Paul begins this chapter by establishing his love for the Thessalonians. The word “*therefore*” in v.1 refers to the previous chapter, where he refers to the believers in Thessalonica as his “glory” and “joy” (1 Th. 2:20). Because of Paul’s great love for the church, he is filled with deep empathy for the persecution they are facing- so much so, that he expresses that he “could no longer endure” (1) not knowing how they were doing spiritually. Because of this, Paul sent Timothy (2) to “establish” and “encourage” them in their faith. Paul recognized that the Christian’s ability to endure trial is based neither on their own merit, or on changing the circumstance itself, but rather on their faith being firmly established in Jesus. God, through Paul, reminds us that in the midst of difficulty, we need to be encouraged to cling to Christ, as He carries us through the trial.

Moreover, Paul demonstrates to us that we are not only to seek encouragement for ourselves, but are to seek the encouragement of others. He shows us this in sending Timothy to Thessalonica, which “left [Paul] in Athens alone” (1). Yet his love, empathy, and desire to encourage his brothers and sisters in Thessalonica, caused Paul to act in compassion, sacrificing the comforting presence of Timothy to en-

courage the believers in Thessalonica. If we are to be a true encouragement to the faith of our brothers and sisters, it will mean loving them sacrificially, as Christ has loved us.

## **II. Why We Need Encouragement (in our faith in Christ) [3-5]**

*3 that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. 4 For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. 5 For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.*

Paul recognized that Satan is opposed to the work God desires to do in and through the church. He is concerned that the “tempter had tempted” (5) the believers in Thessalonica, resulting in their faith being “shaken”(4) and that his “labor might be in vain”(5). Satan tempts believers to stray from their faith in a variety of ways (perhaps talk about some of those ways as a group), from causing us to question God’s goodness, question the Truth of the Gospel, question His sovereign control, etc. To this end, Paul reminds us that suffering is part of following Christ, “that we are appointed to this” and that “we told you... we would suffer tribulation” (5).

This serves as a reminder to us of three things: 1) The devil is opposed to the work of God and we must recognize that we are in a spiritual battle. 2) If we are to effectively fight this battle, we must be sure that our faith is grounded in Jesus, so that we could stand firm in the face of trial. 3) Be encouraged to trust in God’s goodness and faithfulness. Trust that His promises are true. Look to the Gospel as a testimony of His love and victory.

## **III. How to Be encouraged [6-10]**

*6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you— 7 therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. 8 For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, 10 night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith? Their life and manner of conduct proved their integrity and character. The church, along with God, were witnesses to their devout, just, and blameless conduct [10].*

In v.6 we see that Timothy returned to Paul with “good news”. This term is *euangeliz*, from which we derive the word “Gospel”. Paul felt deep encouragement and joy from hearing that the believers in this young church at Thessalonica were standing firm and established in the Lord. From v6-10, we see how we can be encouraged as believers in Christ. First, Paul is encouraged that the Thessalonians “always have good remembrance of us, desiring to see us, as we also to see you” (6). Paul longed for fellowship with his brothers and sisters. With these affectionate words, he reminds us that Christ has brought us together into one family, and there is encouragement in belonging to the family of God. Therefore, we ought to seek to be in deeper fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Secondly, Paul reminds us that we can be encourage by the faith of other believers. Paul, “in all [his] affliction] and distress” as “comforted...by [the] faith” of the Thessalonians. He reminds us, that as seek to encourage our fellow believers in their faith, we can be encouraged about God’s work, as we witness them growing in their own faith. Third, Paul reminds us that recognizing God’s work, even in the midst of affliction, and being thankful to Him will encourage us (9). Finally, Paul reminds us to pray “night and day” (10) with thanksgiving, seeking fellowship with God and our brothers and sisters, and longing to be “established” and “ecouraged” in our faith in Jesus.

## Study Guide Qs

**Q1. Why is it important to be “established” (strong, firmly rooted) and “encouraged” (comforted) in our faith in Jesus?**

**Q2. How can you seek to help Christians around you be more firmly grounded and growing in their faith in Christ?**

**Q3. (as a group) Talk about some trials you have been facing this week. Encourage each other in how the Lord may have been working in the midst of those trials. Encourage each other in why you can trust in God’s goodness and faithfulness.**

**Q4. Discuss some passages in Scripture that have been an encouragement to you during life’s trials.**

### “Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

#### Digging Deeper

1. Here is the link to an encouraging (and short) article by Pastor John Piper. Read it a few times this week, and let it be an encouragement to establishing your faith in Christ: “How Shall We Fight for Joy?” <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-shall-we-fight-for-joy>
2. Spend time talking about attributes of God (His holiness, His goodness, His faithfulness, etc.) and how these recognizing eternal attributes influence how you live daily as a follower of Christ. Spend some time in prayer thanking God for Who He is.

#### Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

[Are there people in your life that need to be encouraged in their walk with the Lord? Take some time out this week to spend meeting with and encouraging them.](#)

#### Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

#### Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

### **Leader Notes:**

**1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

**2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

**3. Feel free to use an icebreaker question or activity** to get to know one another better.

**4. Every time you meet consider asking:**

**a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

**b. How would each of us like to apply the truths we learned to our life?** This question may be answered simply by completing the study guide. Nevertheless, it will generally be beneficial for leaders to encourage each participant to conclude the study by considering how he or she desires to apply the lessons learned.