

## Small Group Study: Stand firm in the Lord: Pray!

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**Opening Prayer:** Father God, so often we come to you in weakness and you give us strength. We cannot thank you enough for your loving companionship and your power at work within us. We ask you to continue to do the good work you have begun in us and always turn our hearts and our minds to you. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

Memory – Meditation Verse: “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.” James 1:2-3

### Opening Discussion:

- When faced with trials or temptations, how do you deal with it?

Ask people to share how they deal with trials of life and with the temptations in life.

- Share a time when you faced a trial or temptation that attempted to pull you away from God and how you handled it.

Ask people to share how they have handled some of the biggest trials and temptations that may have overcome or almost overcome them.

### Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

<sup>1</sup> So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. <sup>2</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well that we are destined for them. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. <sup>8</sup> For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> 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? <sup>10</sup> Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

<sup>11</sup> Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. <sup>12</sup> May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. <sup>13</sup> 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.

- What action did Paul take when he became overly concerned about the spiritual well being of the church in Thessalonica?

They sent Timothy to strengthen and encourage them. They checked in on them to see how they were doing. And most importantly, they earnestly prayed day and night!

- Why did Paul send Timothy to the Thessalonians? What were his objectives?

Strengthen, encourage, give a report on their faith and well being.

- What was the result of the persecution of the Thessalonians? What does this tell you about persecution attempts on the Church of Jesus Christ?

They were made strong in their faith. It teaches me that in persecution, our faith is made strong and we can stand firm with the power of God at work in us.

- How did Paul and the others react to Timothy’s report about the church in Thessalonica?

Thanked God! They prayed even more. They interceded in prayer that God would provide.

- What role did prayer play in the relationship? What role did encouragement play?

In this example we see that whether we are together or apart, we are called to intercede for one another in prayer. Our prayer is our means for activating God's power in our lives and in the lives of others. We also see that we all need encouragement. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, <sup>24</sup> **And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,** <sup>25</sup> **not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.** This reminds me that we are all in need of encouragement and relationship. We each need to give and receive prayer and encouragement. That is the call of the Church.

- Many of us often pray for others but how are Paul's prayers and actions different than some of ours? How should we pray and encourage one another?

Paul's prayer was focused on faith. He was determined to pray and encourage the church to be faithful. He was less concerned with sickness, jobs, family, business decisions, and much more concerned with faith and love.

#### Closing Discussion:

- Share how you might incorporate praying for others to persevere in faith into your prayer life. How might you try to be a better encourager to others?

Ask people to share some real and practical lessons they can take away from this example in Thessalonians.

- Who is God prompting you to pray for regarding their faith and strength in the Lord? How could you encourage that person tomorrow?

Chances are that this study was no chance at all. It is very likely that God had a plan for someone to hear this message today and that someone in your group knows a brother or sister in need of prayer and encouragement in their faith.

Ask people to share who God is prompting them to pray for regarding faith and strength. Ask them to consider how to respond with an act of encouragement and to commit to do that asap.

*Closing by praying for one another and for others who may be facing trials and are in need of encouragement today.*