

Future Hope

Serving in View of Christ's Coming

WEEK 2

WARM-UP

- Who is the most caring person you know? Recall some of the things he or she has done for you.
- Tell us about the person in your family you feel closest to. What made you that close?
- Do you know of a mom who is now caring for young children? Share a bit of what she is going through, from your perspective.

WORD ¹¹*For you know how, like a father with his children,*
¹²*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.*

1 THESSALONIANS 2:11-12

Acts 17 gives us the account of how the church in Thessalonica was birthed. The gospel was preached, people responded, and persecution quickly followed, which led to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy being separated from the new believers. This letter to the Thessalonians is their attempt to encourage the church to remain true to their faith in Christ. One specific way they did this was reminding them of their love for and relationship with each other. While waiting for the fulfillment of the coming kingdom of Christ, the church at that time encountered persecution and affliction. Yet, they were called to live, serve, and persevere in community. Today, we will look at what it means to be in church community while we wait for Christ's glorious return together.

1 | Being in community means treating each other as family.

But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 1 THESSALONIANS 2:7

In 1 Thessalonians 2 alone, Paul referred to those in the church as their brothers and children. They considered themselves mothers and fathers of the new believers, caring for them, encouraging them, and charging them to follow God. While our church community does not replace our natural families, we are blessed to have leaders who love us like sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters. How has someone in your church community been like family to you?

2 | Being in community means sharing lives.

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 1 THESSALONIANS 2:8

The concern and love of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy was genuine. They didn't just relate with the new believers as recipients of the gospel message. They shared their whole selves and lives with them. The relationship permeated every aspect of their lives. What do you think it means to "share lives"? Why is sharing lives important in serving Christ?

3 | Being in community means serving one another.

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. 1 THESSALONIANS 2:9

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy worked hard to preach the gospel, tend to their own needs, and serve others. They didn't want to burden the church with their needs. In many of Paul's letters, we see how he placed the burden on himself for his own needs, even when others could help. And beyond that, he would serve others without expecting anything in return. What labor and toil do you see people in your church community participating in today? Why do you think they serve this way?

APPLICATION

- How do you see the three points lived out in your church community? Prayerfully consider how you can emulate this example and what you can do to influence your community's culture in order to serve God and the church.
- Name three people in your church community that you treat like family. How can you be a blessing to them this week?
- Do you know of new believers or those who just started being part of your church? How can you encourage them to remain true to their faith in Christ?

