

SERMON SERIES DISCIPLING GUIDE

Series: Long Story Short • The Anatomy of a Story • Mar. 23/24, 2019 • Speaker: Matt Boda

Icebreaker

What is the most beautiful church you have ever visited? What do you remember from it? What was it about that church that made it stand out as *beautiful* to you?

Read Together

Read **Acts 17:1-10** together. Someone use Google Maps to find Thessalonica, Greece. Zoom out so you can get a sense of where this city is located in Greece.

Background: Paul went to visit Thessalonica around 49 A.D. The city was crucial to the Roman Empire and almost became the capital of the world because of the waterways that ran into it, and the amount of trade and commerce that happened there. Paul, Silas and Timothy led the charge as they shared the gospel to the people in Thessalonica. Other than sharing the message of Christ, they were there to encourage the believers and plant a church. Describe the highlights (and lowlights) of Paul's brief visit to Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. What happened? Would you call Paul's visit a success?

Now read 1 Thessalonians 1. Some time after the events of Acts 17 took place, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how these new Christians are doing. Upon receiving Timothy's report, Paul sits down and writes a letter to the Thessalonians (the first of two letters he will eventually send). His letter (with help from Silas and Timothy) gives the new believers in Thessalonica guidance on how to live for Christ, how to have hope for the future and encouragement on how to hang on in the suffering and persecution they were facing. The first chapter of this letter sets the context as Paul begins his letter by reminding them of the story of what happened when he visited them.

Questions from 1 Thessalonians 1

1. What do you find most striking from the Thessalonians' story as you read through it in this first chapter?
2. In verse 2, Paul says that they always thank God for them continually and pray for them persistently. How do you think the prayers of Paul and his friends influenced their relationship with the Thessalonian believers?
3. In verse 3, Paul writes about "*faithful work, loving deeds and enduring hope*" that mark the Thessalonians. Where does Paul say those characteristics came from? How do you see these in the lives of Christ-followers today? How about in your life?
4. In verses 4 and 5 Paul describes how the message of the gospel came to them. What is the message of the gospel? (Take some time to read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and Ephesians 2:1-10 as you answer)
5. How was the gospel message delivered? How did it enter the Thessalonians' lives? Is this normal?
6. What happens next in verses 6-7? Would it be a good thing if someone imitated you? Why or why not?
7. Read verses 8-10. How would you describe the Thessalonians' witness and how the gospel went "out" from them? Does this seem to be the norm in most peoples' stories today or not?
8. Imagine the Thessalonians' story being repeated in our culture today. What might it look like? Can you think of examples of people or even groups of people in whom this has happened? Why or why not?

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Application Questions

1. Take 5 minutes of quiet to think about and write down the events that took place in your Long Story Short of coming to know Jesus. Then share them with each other. When you're done, think about everything that has been shared. What are some of the common threads in your stories that show us how God often works?
2. What does your story have in common with the Thessalonians' story?
3. Imagine you're given an assignment to share your story of meeting Jesus with someone this week. Who could you (and might you) share your story with this week? A friend or family member? A child? A grandkid? A sibling you've never shared it with? A coworker?

Prayer

Pray for each other for the courage to share your story this week with the person who came to mind.