



**HATFIELD
CHRISTIAN
CHURCH**

LIFE GROUP GUIDELINE TERM 4 WEEK 6

23 November 2017

Faith to flourish: The face of friendship

'After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you! Yes, you are our pride and joy.'

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 (NLT)

Icebreaker

Identify a special friend who has played an especially positive role in your life. Share with the group how this friend has shaped your life.

Introduction

In 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20, Paul describes very personally and emotionally how he, Silas, and Timothy long to renew their bond of friendship with the Thessalonians. Paul relates how he experiences the painful separation from his Thessalonian brothers and sisters and his efforts to return to them, which have been hindered by obstacles created by Satan. He stresses that the spiritual family at Thessalonica are his pride and joy and their faithful witness and endurance will be his reward when Jesus returns. Paul is as passionate about his flock as a parent over his children. Paul illustrates the heart of a true Christian worker whose real interest is not to be found in his/her reputation, material gain, or human praise but in the quality of the people who he has led to and nurtured in Christ.

Discussion

- Paul's concern for the Thessalonians cost him; he released Timothy, his right hand man, to make the journey to the church to encourage his friends in the faith. True friendship also requires us to make sacrifices on behalf of friends. Consider what friendship has cost

you in terms of time given to friends, material support when they are in need, and even standing up for them when they are isolated, rejected by others, or unjustly attacked. Discuss these issues with the group.

- While Paul is physically absent from the Thessalonians, he continues to support them in two crucial ways: through prayer and through written communication. Through technology and social media you probably remain in daily contact with your friends. Reflect on the consistency of your prayer support for your friends. Discuss the importance of praying regularly and intentionally for friends.
- Paul writes about the experience of persecution experienced by the Thessalonians. Can we claim to suffer similar persecution in our city today? How do we distinguish between true persecution and the 'rough and tumble' of everyday life in a secular world? Also consider opposition you may have experienced from non-Christians when you have presented the Gospel. Discuss how we should go about this task in a sensitive and respectful manner, so that we win people to Christ and not offend them in our zeal.
- When do you appreciate the comfort and encouragement of friendship the most? Consider times of satanic opposition, persecution, personal weakness, as well as the times when things go really well. Choose one of these areas and share what Christian friends have meant to you during such a time.

Prayer

- Thank the Lord for all your friends, Christian and non-Christian, who have generously built into your life over the years.
- Choose a particular friend (you need not mention the name) and pray for that person, together with the group, that God may meet his/her needs and draw him/her closer to Himself. Ask God to show you an action you can take tomorrow to be a blessing to this person.
- Pray for the salvation of your non-Christian friends and acquaintances.