I Thessalonians Series 1
Live Out The Testimony of Faith, Hope, and Love
January 29, 2016

I. WELCOME, 15 mins.
Prepare a couple of simple, fun and delightful icebreakers to help your group warm up. Help your cell group members to lay aside their busyness and tiredness and prepare their hearts to come before God.

II. WORSHIP, 20 mins.
Prayerfully choose a few songs to lead the cell group members to worship God. The worship leader would encourage members to come before the throne of God to seek God’s face, and lead them into God’s presence. During this time, the cell group leader will also lead the group to pray aloud for the following prayer items:

A. MISSION ORGANIZATION: ____________, and their needs are: ____________
(Please contact the church if you don’t know the needs of the mission organization.)

B. CHURCH MINISTRY:
- 1/31 & 2/7 Healing Team Training
- 2/2 English Leaders Meeting @ 6:30pm in E5
- 2/3 Bi-Weekly Prayer Meeting @ 7:30pm in Fellowship Hall
- 2/6 Chinese New Year Celebration @ 6:30pm in Fellowship Hall
- 2/17 Bi-Weekly Prayer Meeting @ 7:30pm in Fellowship Hall
- 3/4 Worship Night @ 7:30pm in Fellowship Hall

C. New comer: ____________ Confirm new comers’ name before the meeting.
For sick members, friends or relatives: ____________ Please discuss how you may show your care to them.

III. WORD, 45 mins. Through sharing and discussing God’s word, the group applies it to their daily life.

A. Sharing the message from last Sunday’s sermon: (It would be helpful if you could listen on-line once again)
1. What is the key message from last Sunday’s sermon? How did God speak to you through the message?
2. How would you respond to the message? What action will you take after listening to the message?

B. Topic of the week: Live Out The Testimony of Faith, Hope, & Love

Verses: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
Memorizing Verses: We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
(1 Thessalonians 1:3)

Preface:
According to the Book of Acts, Paul’s second mission trip was with Silas. They first came to the city of Macedonian and preached there. Later they went to the city of Thessalonica and preached the gospel to the local residents. These residents were mostly idol worshipers. When they heard the gospel from Paul they believed in the Lord and a church was established. However, not long after that Paul and Silas suffered false accusations and persecution by the local non-believing Jews. They then hastily left, heading west to Berea and started preaching there (Acts 17:1-10).

At this time, the new believers in Thessalonica suffered prosecutions from the non-believing Jews and local idol worshipers, even their lives were threatened. Paul worried that they could not bear such sufferings as they became new believers of the Lord not too long ago. He had only been there for three Sabbath’s. That’s only three weeks or twenty one days, so they have not been equipped by Paul. So Paul’s heart was worried for the young believers. Therefore he sent Timothy to visit them.

When Timothy came back he brought good news to Paul that was both assuring and happy. While Paul wrote to them, he could not help himself but praise them because they were living out a life of faith, hope and love as a testimony. They influenced the church believers in the surrounding areas and became role models for them. Paul encouraged them to continue in the spirit of God’s given grace and peace while holding on to the Lord’s teaching and hope for His return.

1. Paul thanked God for the believer’s faith, hope, and love (1 Thessalonians 1:1-3)
   A. Work Produced Faith: Although we become righteous by faith, but faith without works is dead. If we trust in God
then we need to obey Him. Even demons believe in God but, disobey Him. (James 2:17-20).

B. Labor Prompted By Love: Jesus loves us to the very end. He willingly suffered death on the cross, with no regret, in order to save us. When we love God, and people, we need to be willing to bear difficulties and pay all costs.

C. Endurance Inspired By Hope: believers hope to see the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, because they have been enduring through life threatening persecution or tribulations yet they still persevere to the end, and stand firm in the Lord.

2. Paul praised the believers for imitating him and the Lord’s Life (1 Thessalonians 1:4-7):

A. Paul’s testimony of preaching the Gospel (4-5): When Paul was preaching the Gospel to the people of Thessalonica, he not only preached the word of God, but also relied on God’s authority, the power of the Holy Spirit, and strong faith to spread the gospel.

(1). God’s power and authority broke the power of darkness of the local idols and demolished strongholds, and led people to Christ. It is because the Gospel is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).

(2). Paul relied on the power of the Holy Spirit with signs and wonders, to testify the word of God.

(3). Paul had strong faith in God: Paul said he is the sinner among the sinners because before he became a believer, he not only didn’t believe; he also persecuted the believers of the church. Yet God still redeemed him, and forgave him of all his sins and called him to be the apostle of the Gentiles. He suffered great persecutions and sufferings preaching the Gospel, without backing down. He was once thrown out of the city’s gate after being hit and losing consciousness. In addition, when he woke up he went back into the city to continue to preach the Gospel.

These experiences made Paul understand God’s greatness and faithfulness, giving him confidence and faith when preaching the gospel. Paul’s life was dedicated to the Lord. His life overflowed with the love of Christ hence he was able to touch other people’s hearts and turn them to God.

B. The believers became imitators of Paul and of the Lord (6-7): When the disciples of Thessalonica were threatened with their lives they still had the joy of the presence of the Holy Spirit, trusted in the Lord, and held on to the Word of God. They had learned from Paul on how to face persecution while trusting in the Lord. Meanwhile, Paul was imitating Jesus who suffered crucifixion, to accomplish the salvation plan put forth by the Father. This is what Paul told the church of Corinthians that “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). The faith, hope, and love of the believers in Thessalonica who follow the Lord became a testimony and a role model for the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

3. The believers live out the life of faith, hope, and love (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10)

A. The believer’s faith became known everywhere (8): The believers in Thessalonica not only became examples to other believers but other believers in the surrounding areas talked about their faith.

B. Turn away from idols and serve the Lord with love (4, 9): The believers in Thessalonica were loved and chosen by God. How precious is that! Therefore, once they accepted Jesus as their Redeemer they totally abandoned the idols they worshiped before and turned their hearts to the one true God. They loved God wholeheartedly and served Him God, and preached the gospel.

C. Keep living hope and wait for the Lord’s second coming (10): Paul urged the Thessalonians believers that before the second coming of Christ, to keep obeying God’s word, imitate Jesus Christ, keep living with faith, hope and love, and witness for the Glory of God in a time where society is antagonistic towards Christians.
Discussion (please choose the topic according to the needs of the members):

1. When you heard the words of faith, hope, and love, what is your immediate reaction?
2. How did Paul praise the believers in Thessalonica regarding their faith, hope, and love? How does it apply to you?
3. How did the believers in Thessalonica become the example of other churches? What can we learn from these examples?
4. How did the believers live out faith, hope, and love in their daily lives? How can we live out faith, hope and love in our own lives?
5. Please practice faith, hope, and love in the next 6 days in your daily life and share with everyone in the next cell group. Today: Pick one that you would like to focus on this week, and say why?

Prayer:

Dear Abba Father in heaven, we thank You and praise You. You led us to see the saints in Thessalonica and how they lived out lives of faith, hope, and love by imitating Jesus’ life on earth. Not only had they became the example of all saints but also a powerful channel for the Gospel. Lord we are willing to imitate you, follow You, and witness You in our daily lives, so we can also overflow the fragrant of Your glory and lead people towards You. We pray all these in the precious and Holy name of the Lord Jesus, Amen!

4. WORK (Pray for each other), 10 mins.

Please break into group of 2 or 3 to pray for each other’s needs.