

What God Wants the Church to Be

Introduction

All the basic ingredients that our Lord wants in a church were in the Thessalonian congregation. The epistle that Paul wrote to them shows us the kind of church that Christ builds. It contains no reference to the number of members. It doesn't tell us about their goals and objectives, their programming, the kind of sermons that were preached, or the music that they sung. It doesn't tell us about their Sunday School, their worship services, or their high-school camps. However, it does tell us about several spiritual elements.

The apostle Paul first preached the gospel to the Thessalonians during his second missionary journey. After leaving them, he sent Timothy to find out how they were doing. When Timothy returned, he came with a fantastic report: "When Timothy came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you; therefore, brethren, we were comforted" (1 Thess. 3:6-7). That good news prompted Paul to write this first letter to the Thessalonians.

I trust that as we look at some of the basic principles in the epistle to the Thessalonians, the Lord will help you see what He desires from you, and how your church can be what He wants it to be. First Thessalonians gives a pattern for the ideal church.

Lesson

I. A SAVED CHURCH

A. The Priority of the Church

The church at Thessalonica was a saved church. That is significant because many churches today don't know the meaning of salvation. The Thessalonian church was an assembly of born-again Christians. That fact is verified in the first four verses of the book by the terms Paul used: "Paul, and Silvanus [Silas], and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God, the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ,

in the sight of God and our Father, knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

Paul could thank God for the Thessalonians because they were all "in the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 1). They gave evidence of personally knowing Him as their Savior. Therein lies the beginning of an effective church. The reason so many churches are ineffective is the mixture of wheat and tares--even among the leadership. Having unregenerate people in places of responsibility works against what God is trying to accomplish, and confuses the church's message.

1. Exemplified

Let's look at Acts 17 to see how the church at Thessalonica began.

a) Paul's strategy

Verse 1 says, "When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, [Paul and his companions] came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews." When Paul entered a city to spread the gospel, he generally went to the synagogue first because he would find the greatest opportunity there since he himself was Jewish. Furthermore, he realized that if he went to the Gentiles first, the Jews would not be willing to listen to him.

b) Paul's sermon

Verses 2-3 report the content of Paul's preaching: "Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen from again the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." The Jewish people had difficulty accepting Jesus as the Messiah because He had once died. Most Jewish people did not understand the concept of a suffering Messiah, which was prophesied in such places as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. Therefore, Paul spent time showing them that the Messiah had to suffer to fulfill God's plan. As a result of Paul's preaching, "some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" (v. 4).

c) The people's response

From the very beginning, there was a tremendous response, even though Paul spent only three Sabbaths in Thessalonica. Paul

was overjoyed to learn from Timothy that they were having a dynamic impact on the surrounding area.

2. Explained

Notice the phrases "in God, the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 1), "in our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 3), and "in the Holy Spirit" (v. 5). Paul used the phrase "in Christ" in his epistles 132 times. It identifies the relationship that believers have with the living God. We don't just follow the teachings of Christ--we are in Christ.

a) 1 Corinthians 6:17--"He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."

b) Romans 6:3-5, 8--Paul said this regarding the identity of a believer in his union with Christ: "Know ye not that, as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ [placed into union with him] were baptized into His death? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."

Paul was not referring to water baptism, although that does symbolize the spiritual realities of death with Christ and new life in Him. The act of baptism is not a saving act. He was merely saying that when you became a Christian, you were placed into the church of Jesus Christ by a divine miracle. Your old life died and you rose to walk in newness of life in His resurrection. Therefore, you are inextricably linked in union with Jesus Christ.

c) Galatians 2:20--Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The Christian experience is not simply following the moral precepts of a man, or believing in a historical figure; believers experience union with the living God through Jesus Christ.

d) 2 Corinthians 5:17--What are the results of being in Christ? "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." When you come into union with Christ, you become a new creation because the old self dies and you are made new.

- e) 1 Thessalonians 2:13--Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians because they so readily received His truth: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." They didn't receive Paul's preaching like it was some philosophy or new theology. When they heard the Word, they realized it wasn't just something to tickle their intellect or give them a new religious experience. They were regenerated internally as a result of receiving and believing the gospel.
- f) 2 Peter 1:4--It is an incredible privilege being a Christian; the very life of God is yours! Peter said that believers have become "partakers of the divine nature."

3. Evidenced

Paul began 1 Thessalonians by saying, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" because the Thessalonians were receiving those blessings. No one can receive the grace or peace of God unless he is a child of God. So even the beginning of Paul's letter acknowledges the salvation of the Thessalonians.

The evidence of their salvation is also indicated in verse 3: "[We remember] without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope." That mighty combination of Christian virtues--faith, hope, and love--belong only to the redeemed. As a result of what he saw in the lives of the Thessalonians, Paul knew they were redeemed. There weren't any phonies in Thessalonica--they were a pure congregation.

B. The Purity of the Church

The purity of the church is a prerequisite to effectively serving God. Since God blesses a church that is saved, we know that Satan wants to infiltrate it with unbelievers--especially at high levels. How do you keep unbelievers out of the church? It's not easy because of the difficulty of distinguishing wheat from tares. In fact Jesus cautioned against trying to separate false believers from true ones. We must wait for Him to do that in the end times (Matt. 13:27-30). In the early church some were kept out through the divine discipline of sin.

1. The examples

a) The church at Jerusalem

Ananias and Sapphira apparently envied the praise others received for having given to those in need. So they decided to sell a piece of property and gave the proceeds to the Lord. However, they decided to keep a little, thinking no one would ever find out. As a result, the Lord caused them to drop dead in front of the congregation (Acts 5:1-5, 10).

Such serious and sudden discipline had a profound effect. You can imagine that everyone in the congregation immediately adjusted anything that wasn't right. In fact verses 11-13 say, "Great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.... And of the rest dared no man join himself to them." The word spread throughout Jerusalem not to join that organization because just one mistake resulted in death! The realization that sin will be dealt with deters the tares from mixing with the wheat.

b) The church at Pergamum

Revelation 2:14 records Christ's warning against having a congregation filled with unbelievers. To the church of Pergamum He said, "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." That refers to compromising with the world's system. Balaam was instrumental in causing Israel to interact sinfully with pagans (Num. 31:15-16). In Revelation 2:16 Jesus says, "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." Christ will purge His church if it compromises with the world and begins to allow intermarriage with the system.

2. The effects

The key to the success of the Thessalonian church was its purity. Acts 2 tells us 3,000 people believed the gospel and were baptized at the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost. Verse 41 says "they continued steadfastly." That regenerated church turned the city of Jerusalem upside down. They made such an impact that the Jewish leaders said, "Ye have filled with Jerusalem with your doctrine" (Acts 5:28). When you have a totally regenerated assembly of people moving through a town in the power of the Holy Spirit, they are bound to make

a great impact.

It was no different for the Thessalonians. Paul said, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thess. 1:5). When the Thessalonians received and believed the gospel, they experienced the energy of the Holy Spirit and the assurance and transformation that accompanies union with Christ.

II. A SURRENDERED CHURCH

A. Explained

Verse 6 of chapter 1 says, "Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord." The genuine character of their salvation is apparent in that statement. The Greek word translated "followers" is mim[ma]let[ma]les, from which the English word mimic is derived. The Thessalonian Christians weren't just talkers; they were imitators. They didn't merely talk about their Christian experience; they actually modeled their lives after Paul and his companions.

B. Exhorted

Imitating godly men was a constant theme of Paul's.

1. 1 Corinthians 4:16--"Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me." Paul didn't have to say that to the Thessalonians because they were already doing it.
2. 1 Corinthians 11:1--It may seem audacious for Paul to tell people to pattern their lives after his, but not when we consider the Christlikeness of his life. He told the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

In Ephesians 5:1 Paul says, "Be ye, therefore, followers of God." Paul exhorted Christians to be followers of God, Christ, and himself. That is precisely what was happening in the Thessalonian assembly. They were committed to being like Jesus.

C. Exemplified

Christians are to be not only collective representatives of Christ on earth, but also individual representatives as each believer strives to be like Him. The pursuit of the Christian is to be like Christ. That's the key to unity in the church. If all of us are like Christ, we will have no problem getting along with each other.

Unfortunately, we are not always in tune with one another because we are not all following Christ. A.W. Tozer said that if a hundred pianos were merely tuned to each other, their pitch would not be very accurate. But if they were all tuned to one tuning fork, they would automatically be tuned to each other. Similarly, unity in the church isn't the result of adjusting to everyone else. Rather, it is becoming like Jesus Christ. The Thessalonian church was surrendered to Christlikeness, which had been demonstrated in the lives of Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

III. A SUFFERING CHURCH

First Thessalonians 1:6 says, "Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit." The Thessalonian church didn't have it easy. In fact, any church that is saved and surrendered to Christ is going to have a difficult time.

A. Recorded

As soon as the Thessalonian assembly began, they experienced opposition. Acts 17 records what happened: "The Jews who believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring [Paul, Silas, and Timothy] out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come here also" (vv. 5-6). Persecution began immediately for that church.

B. Reviewed

First Thessalonians 2:14-16 reviews the persecution that the church had experienced: "Ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus; for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

C. Reinforced

The church that is saved and surrendered to Christ is going to antagonize the world. Consequently suffering will come. Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.... If they have persecuted Me, they

will also persecute you" (John 15:18, 20).

In Colossians 1:24 we read that Paul was willing to suffer if it brought about the salvation of others: "[I] rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh." Paul meant that since the world couldn't directly persecute Jesus anymore, it would persecute His followers. The apostle was willing to suffer for the One who had suffered for him.

Wouldn't it be great to be persecuted for being Christlike because you've turned the world upside down? If unbelievers became irritated about your church (assuming it wasn't for being unnecessarily offensive), it would probably mean that it was correctly preaching the gospel in a manner that exposes sin. The church that confronts the world is going to suffer. Tradition records that eleven out of the twelve apostles were martyred.

{*} **The Conscience of the World**

The church is to be the conscience of the world. It must confront sin without being obnoxious and earning a bad reputation. That's not to say we should be unkind to people who don't know Christ. Rather the opposite should be true. When the world is sinful, we need want to expose its sin. When the world needs a clear picture of Christ, we want to present that picture. And when Satan and his system opposes the truth, we need to be ready. The church needs to be in the world, but not a part of the world (John 17:15-18). We function as its conscience by helping people face the realities of God, Christ, sin, death, and immortality.
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IV. A SOUL-WINNING CHURCH

A. Living Exemplary Lives

The Thessalonian church had a marvelous two-fold testimony. The first way they spread the gospel was by living exemplary lives. Paul said of them, "Ye were an example to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thess. 1:7). Other people could look at the Thessalonian church and be attracted to Christ by what they saw. Amazingly, it took the Thessalonians only two weeks to establish a lifestyle that was surrendered to Christ.

The Thessalonians were like Jesus Christ. They set a pattern for everyone else, including believers. Chapter 1 shows the response that believers in Macedonia and Achaia had as a result of the Thessalonians' testimony: "They themselves

show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God" (v. 9).

Paul didn't have to tell others about the conversion of the Thessalonians because they told it by their lives. The latest news around was that many people in Thessalonica turned to God from idols. Incredibly Thessalonica was only fifty miles from Mount Olympus--the supposed residence of the Greek gods. Although they had been raised from their earliest years to believe in a plurality of gods, within three successive Sabbaths an entire community of believers dropped their idolatrous system and began serving the living God. That kind of turnaround makes news.

We first witness to the world by our transformed lives. For example, if you're a drunk, you can't help a drunkard by telling him to shape up. If you're a crook, you can't help another crook by telling him to be an honest man. If you're living an ungodly life, you don't have anything to offer people.

B. Proclaiming the Truth

The second way of spreading the gospel is through a verbal witness of the Word. First Thessalonians 1:8 says, "From you sounded out the word of the Lord ... in every place." The Greek word translated "sounded out" is ex[ma]lech[ma]letai, from which we get the English word echo. One's Christian testimony should never be independent of God's Word. It should be only an echo of God's truth. An echo always repeats what is originally spoken. God has put His voice in you--the Holy Spirit. He doesn't want you creating your own words; He wants you to echo His truth.

The Thessalonian congregation led such exemplary lives that the world couldn't believe it. The dramatic transformation of their characters created a platform of credibility from which they echoed "the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place" (v. 8). As a result, Paul explained that he and his companions didn't need to tell anyone the gospel because the Thessalonian congregation had already spread the news everywhere.

How did the news get around so fast if 1 Thessalonians was only written a short time after the church was started? The city of Thessalonica was located on the Via Egnatia, the main highway from West to East. It was a major land trade route. The city, located on the Thermaic Gulf, was a sea port that served as a hub of commerce. Before long the news had spread and everyone was talking about the little

assembly in Thessalonica that not only lived out the gospel, but preached it as well.

V. A SECOND-COMING CHURCH

Verse 10 says the Thessalonians turned from idols to serve God "and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." Jesus promised He would come back and gather the faithful to be with Him forever (John 14:1-3). Consequently the ideal church awaits His return.

A. The Mockers

Did you know that many churches aren't waiting for Christ's return?

Peter said, "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet. 3:3-4). There are people today who claim to be Christians, but don't ever talk about the return of Christ. In fact, I heard a preacher say, "I never talk about the return of Christ--there's too much confusion on that issue." Maybe it's fortunate for his congregation that he doesn't. There's no sense in adding more confusion to what already exists. But that doesn't excuse him from speaking the truth. Every church that is truly committed to being what God wants it to be must be aware that Jesus is coming.

B. The Motivation

Anticipation of Christ's return should motivate us to live godly lives for His service in the present.

1. The rewards

The last recorded words of Jesus are: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). The only way you can prove you love Him is to serve Him with your whole heart.

Then at His return you will receive "gold, silver, [and] precious stones" instead of "wood, hay, [and] stubble" (1 Cor. 3:12). According to Revelation 4:10 we will cast our crowns, which are symbolic of rewards, at His feet. The more crowns you have earned, the more you can give back to Him.

2. The responsibility

Knowing that Christ is coming should give us a sense of urgency about sharing the good news with others. After His resurrection Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "Ye shall receive power, after

the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me." When He had ascended into heaven, two angels appeared and said, "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (v. 11). Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:11, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." When I realize the impending judgment of God, I can't help but persuade men and women to be "reconciled to God" (v. 20).

A church that doesn't believe in the return of Jesus Christ has no sense of rewards or urgency to deliver the ungodly from judgment. The Lord wants us to remember His return.

VI. A STEADFAST CHURCH

A. Explained

First Thessalonians 3:8 says, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." Standing fast in the Lord means two things: not wavering doctrinally and maintaining a steadfast love. A person can stand fast doctrinally but dry up spiritually. That's why a Christian needs to stand fast in terms of love.

Unfortunately the church at Ephesus didn't. Our Lord reproved them, saying, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4). The Ephesians were correct doctrinally, but they failed to have both ingredients of a healthy church--sound doctrine and love. When you stand firm on the Word of God without wavering and in a commitment of love to one another, you've got a strong stand.

B. Exemplified

1. By their sound doctrine

The Thessalonian church stood firmly on the Word of God. Paul said, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit.... And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction" (1:5-6). Paul also told them, "Ye received the word of God ... not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God" (2:13). "We were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith" (3:7). How exciting it is when a church doesn't waver from its doctrine or from its commitment to love one another!

I often pray that God would help our church to continue to stand true to His Word--especially since Satan wants to

infiltrate the church with "grievous wolves" (Acts 20:29) who will devour the saints. God wants us to be aware that false teachers can arise from within the church.

Therefore, we must be committed to standing fast in sound doctrine. I've talked to pastors who have left their churches because they had fallen into false doctrine. That's heartbreaking because those pastors were responsible for leading some of their members to Christ. Two things could break my heart: if Grace church lost its firm stand on doctrine and stopped loving one another.

2. By their steadfast love

The Thessalonians stood fast in love. Paul said, "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And, indeed, ye do it toward all the brethren" (4:9-10).

Paul didn't need to say much about the quality of their love because they were faithfully putting it into practice.

VII. A SUBMISSIVE CHURCH

A. Explained

This final principle isn't as obvious as the others. In no other New Testament epistle did Paul make as many unqualified and undefended commands as he did in this one. For example, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians he repeatedly had to defend his instructions (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:10[en]2:5; 2 Cor. 10:1[en]13:10).

B. Exemplified

However, Paul didn't have to reprimand or convince the Thessalonians of anything. In chapter 4 he says, "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (v. 11). Similarly, chapter 5 contains many brief, unqualified commands: "We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now, we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast

that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil" (vv. 12-22).

Paul didn't need to give a detailed explanation of his instructions to the Thessalonians because they obviously were a submissive church. He didn't have to defend himself. Imagine a preacher getting up on Sunday morning and saying only, "My text for this morning is 1 Thessalonians 5:16--'Rejoice evermore!' Now let us pray. Next week we'll look at verse 17." If Paul said to the Corinthians, "Pray without ceasing," it would have taken him three chapters to prove why! But that wasn't necessary with the Thessalonian church.

Paul said, "Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy" (1:6). In the next chapter he said, "Ye received the word of God ... not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God" (2:13). And in chapter 4 he said, "Furthermore, then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God" (v. 1). The Thessalonians unconditionally submitted to the Word of God.

{*} **The Primary Purpose of a Pastor**

The primary role of a pastor is to teach his people to submit to Scripture. If a pastor preaches on topics that are purely his own ideas without any biblical content, a church will never be trained to accept the Word of God when it is presented. Should a problem arise in the church, the pastor might feel the need to preach a biblical sermon. However the people will probably be indifferent since they've never learned to submit to the Word before. To them Scripture sounds merely like another one of their pastor's opinions. The biblical pastor leads his church to willingly receive and obey the Word. {e*}

Focusing on the Facts

1. Why did Paul send Timothy back to Thessalonica? What did Timothy report about the church in that city (see p. 1)?
2. Why could Paul thank God for the Thessalonians (see p. 2)?
3. Why are many churches ineffective? What is the result of having unbelieving people in places of responsibility within the church (see p. 2)?
4. Why did Paul preach first in the synagogues when he entered a city

(see p. 2)?

5. According to Acts 17:2-3, what was Paul's message to the Thessalonian Jews (see p. 2)?
6. What does it mean to be "in the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:1; see p. 3)?
7. What evidence did Paul cite that demonstrated the salvation of the Thessalonians (see pp. 4-5)?
8. What is a prerequisite for a church to effectively serve God (see p. 5)?
9. Of whom did the Thessalonians become followers? Why (see p. 6)?
10. What is the key to unity in the church? Explain (see p. 7).
11. Describe the opposition the Thessalonian church experienced (see pp. 7-8).
12. Why does the world persecute Christians (John 15:18, 20; see p. 8)?
13. Why was Paul willing to suffer for Christ (see p. 8)?
14. How can the church be the conscience of the world (see pp. 8-9)?
15. Why didn't Paul have to tell surrounding cities about the conversion of the Thessalonians (see p. 9)?
16. How did the Thessalonians spread the gospel (see p. 10)?
17. How should anticipating Christ's return motivate us (see p. 11)?
18. What should Christ's return give us a sense of urgency about (see p. 11)?
19. What two complementary things does a Christian need to stand fast in (see p. 12)?
20. What happens when sound doctrine is not balanced with love? Give a biblical example of a church that failed to keep that balance (see p. 12).
21. Why apparently wasn't it necessary for Paul to defend his commands before the Thessalonians (see p. 13)?
22. What is a submissive church eager to receive and obey (1 Thess. 2:13; see p. 14)?

Pondering the Principles

1. Meditate on Ephesians 4:13, 24; Hebrews 12:10; and 1 John 3:2-3. Praise God that He has enabled us as Christians to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4).

2. Are you a follower of godly Christians, like the Thessalonians were? To determine the kind of people you should be patterning your life after, read Titus 1:5[en]2:15. If such examples are currently lacking in your church, strive to become one yourself so that others may follow you. As you systematically read through the New Testament, study the life of Christ and the supreme example He has set for you to model your life after.

3. Evaluate yourself and the spiritual health of your church on the basis of the seven characteristics we've seen in the Thessalonian church. Have you and the majority of your church been saved? Are you committed to being like Christ and willing to suffer because of that? Are you regularly praying for opportunities to share the gospel? Are you living the kind of life that will lend credence to your message? Does your church have a ministry for training people to evangelize? Are you anxiously awaiting the return of Christ? Does your church share the same sense of urgency that the Thessalonian church did? Does your church have a proper balance of love and sound doctrine? Are you submissive to the leaders of your church, or are you often indifferent or in opposition to what they are trying to accomplish? If any of those elements are lacking in your life or in your church, determine the steps you can take to strengthen those areas.

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