

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10 (NLT)

8 And now the word of the Lord is ringing out from you to people everywhere, even beyond Macedonia and Achaia, for wherever we go we find people telling us about your faith in God. We don't need to tell them about it, **9** for they keep talking about the wonderful welcome you gave us and how you turned away from idols to serve the living and true God. **10** And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God's Son from heaven—Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgment.

BIG IDEA

A believer's life is marked by such change that others can SEE it! (v.9)

Discussion Questions

- 1. This will be interesting... Go around the circle and ask what each person's favorite candy is, and if their candy made a noise every time someone bought it, what would that sound be?** (Interpretation welcomed)
- 2. Reflect on 1 Thessalonians 1:1-7 from last week. What was the main idea from last week? What did the Thessalonians start doing in verse 6?**

Leader Tip: Main Idea: A believer in Jesus is known for their faith, hope, and love. They became imitators of Paul and the Lord and welcomed the gospel message even in the midst of severe suffering.

- 3. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10. In verse 8, Paul uses the phrase, "and now" to describe the result of what happened in v. 2-7. So what was it that began happening in verse 8-9? What does this tell you about the significance of what your life models?**

Leader Tip: Help students learn to find answers in the text (*reading comprehension*). The Thessalonians became models to all believers as imitators of God (v. 7) and now the word of the Lord was ringing out from them to people beyond them (v. 8). The power of the Holy Spirit changing their lives was so evident, news about it was travelling even to other countries!

- 4. What is a BIG thing mentioned in verse 9, that the people began to turn away from? Who did they begin to turn to instead?**

Leader Tip: In our culture today, it is not as common for us to worship idols in the form of

statues of gods, but idolatry is still very present. An idol today can be defined as “anything that we desire or worship more than God.”

5. What is the significance of the phrase “living and true God”? How does this description contrast with what an idol is?

Leader Tip: The Thessalonians were turning from unreal (dead, not living, not active) gods to the true, living, and active God.

6. What are a couple things you desire the most? Are there things in your life you are depending on to satisfy your deepest needs?

Leader Tip: In his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller writes: “A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living.”

- **Thessalonians idols:** worshipping in temples of false gods: Zeus, Aphrodite, etc.
- **2020 idols:** identity wrapped up in social media, desiring marriage/dating more than a relationship w/God, desiring to be “the best” rather than desiring what Jesus desires for you, more concerned about what people think about you than what Jesus thinks, know and care more about celebrities than God... etc)

7. What would it look like for you to TURN AWAY (repentance) from those idols? What is difficult about turning away from idols that the culture deems normal and ok?

Leader Tip: This is a good opportunity to discuss turning away from idols in practical ways, but also discuss why that can also be confusing and hard. Even *good things* can become idols. Paul was so thankful when he heard about the Thessalonians’ faith because they were turning away from things the culture saw as normal -and were even being persecuted for it (severe suffering). But their faith in God was the inspiring message going out to other people, not the fear of hardship.

8. What does v. 10 say they were looking forward to? How do you think the future hope of Jesus’ return helped the Thessalonians follow God even when suffering for it?

Leader Tip: The promise of Jesus’ return impacts the lives of believers because 1) when we are in Christ, we are rescued from the terrors of God’s judgement against our sin and 2) we have hope of him restoring the whole world to perfect peace. The Thessalonians understood that God’s future just wrath against sin was far worse than present suffering from people. “...endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 3).

9. Close out your group time in prayer (individually or as a group), admitting to God where there are idols in your life and asking him to help you know him more as the living and true God that satisfies all of our needs.