

Small Group Guide: Living in the Last Days (Week 2)

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by inviting God's presence and asking Him to open hearts and minds to His truth as you discuss living faithfully in these last days.

Ice Breaker Question

What is one area of your life where you feel the tension between pleasing people and pleasing God?

Sermon Overview

This week, Pastor focused on how Christians should live in the last days based on 1 Thessalonians 2-3 and 2 Timothy. The early church in Thessalonica faced persecution, idolatry, and opposition, yet they remained faithful. Paul's example and instruction give us a blueprint for living with urgency and purpose as we await Christ's return.

Key Scripture References:

- 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8, 3:7-8

- 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 4:3-5

- Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2, Matthew 24:12

Key Takeaways

1. ****We Must Speak Boldly**** (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2)

Paul spoke the gospel with courage despite having been beaten and imprisoned. This boldness wasn't natural—it was supernatural, empowered by God's Spirit.

2. ****We Must Live Purely**** (1 Thessalonians 2:4-6)

Paul lived for God's approval, not people's. In a culture obsessed with acceptance and validation, we're called to pursue holiness and moral integrity.

3. ****We Must Love Deeply**** (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8)

Paul shared not just the gospel message but his very life. Deep, sacrificial love—investing time and bearing burdens—proves the Gospel is true and alive.

4. ****We Must Endure Faithfully**** (1 Thessalonians 3:7-8)

Standing firm under pressure is like a soldier holding position in battle. Our faithfulness in trials testifies to the power of Christ in us.

Central Truth:

****Our lives must be a greater testimony than our words.**** (1 Peter 2:12)

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Context

1. What stood out to you about the historical context of Thessalonica? How does knowing Paul wrote this letter after being beaten and imprisoned change how you read his words?

2. The sermon explained that we've been in the "last days" since Pentecost (Acts 2:17). How does this perspective change your sense of urgency about living for Christ?

Speaking Boldly

3. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2. Paul "dared" to share the gospel despite opposition. When have you felt afraid to speak about your faith? What held you back?

4. The sermon emphasized that boldness is supernatural, not natural. How can we practically seek God's help to speak boldly? Share a time when God gave you courage.

Living Purely

5. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6. Paul says we should live "not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts." Where in your life are you most tempted to compromise for acceptance?

6. How does living purely serve as a testimony? Can you think of someone whose integrity made you curious about their faith?

Loving Deeply

7. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8. Paul uses the image of a nursing mother to describe his care. What does it mean to share "not only the gospel but our lives as well"?

8. In our digital age, we often offer emojis instead of presence. How can we practically move from surface-level interactions to deep, sacrificial love in our relationships?

Enduring Faithfully

9. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:7-8. Paul rejoiced that the Thessalonians were "standing firm." What trials or pressures are currently testing your faith? How can this group support you?

10. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5 and 4:3-5. These passages describe the moral climate of the last days. Where do you see these characteristics in our culture today? In the church?

Personal Reflection

11. The sermon's central point is that "our lives must be a greater testimony than our words." On a scale of 1-10, how well do you think your life backs up what you say you believe? What needs to change?

12. Which of the four calls (speak boldly, live purely, love deeply, endure faithfully) is most challenging for you right now? Why?

Life Change Challenge Review

Pastor gave three specific challenges for the week. Let's commit to these together:

1. Bold Sharing Step

****Challenge:**** Identify one person God is calling you to speak to about your faith this week.

- ****Group Activity:**** Share the name of that person with the group (if appropriate) and pray for each other to have boldness.

- ****Accountability:**** Plan to share what happened at next week's meeting.

2. Purity Check

****Challenge:**** Examine where you're seeking people's approval over God's. Choose one area to align with purity.

- ****Group Activity:**** Discuss common areas where we compromise (social media, workplace, relationships). What would choosing God's approval look like practically?

- ****Personal Reflection:**** Journal instances this week where you chose people-pleasing over God-pleasing.

3. Deep Love Action

****Challenge:**** Reach out to someone you've kept at a distance—invite them for a meal or listen to their story.

- ****Group Activity:**** Brainstorm practical ways to show sacrificial love this week.

- ****Commitment:**** Each person share one specific action they'll take.

Practical Application Ideas

****For Individuals:****

- Start each day this week asking God: "Give me boldness to speak, purity to live, depth to love, and strength to endure."

- Create a "testimony inventory": List ways your life backs up your words and areas where there's disconnect.

- Fast from seeking validation on social media for one week; instead, seek God's approval through prayer and Scripture.

****For the Group:****

- Partner up for accountability on the three challenges.

- Share testimonies of boldness, purity, love, or endurance at each meeting.

- Identify one person or family in your church community facing trials and rally around them with practical support.

****For Families:****

- Have a family discussion about what it means to live differently from the world.
- Share with your children one time you had to choose God's approval over peer pressure.
- Practice sacrificial love by serving together at a local ministry.

Closing Reflection

Read together 1 Peter 2:12:

"Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God."

****Reflection Questions:****

- What would change in your daily routine if you truly believed Jesus could return at any moment?
- How can this group help each other live with greater urgency and faithfulness?

Prayer Focus

Take time to pray for:

1. ****Boldness**** to speak the gospel despite opposition or fear

2. **Purity** to live for God's approval alone
3. **Deep love** to share our lives, not just our words
4. **Faithful endurance** in trials and testing
5. **Specific individuals** each person identified for bold sharing
6. **The church** to be a faithful witness in these last days

Close by praying for anyone in the group who needs to surrender their life to Christ or recommit to following Him wholeheartedly.

For Next Week

- Complete the three Life Change Challenges
- Journal about your experiences
- Be ready to share testimonies of how God worked through your obedience
- Read ahead for Week 3 of the "Living in the Last Days" series

Additional Resources

Scripture Memory Verse:

"We speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts."* — 1 Thessalonians 2:4

Recommended Reading:

- Acts 17 (Paul's ministry in Thessalonica)
- 1 Thessalonians (entire letter—only 5 chapters)
- 2 Timothy 3-4 (characteristics of the last days)

Remember: Time is short. Jesus is coming soon. Let's live with boldness, purity, deep love, and faithful endurance!