



Overview

Faith, hope, and love are familiar words that have been echoed throughout the course of time, crossed the barriers of oceans, encouraged hearts, and resurrected lives. As a body, the church's job is to live in such a way that the phrase, "faith, hope, and love" isn't simply a trite, churchy idiom, but rather sounds forth with an echo of familiarity and solid evidence of an authentic and dynamic life lived for the sake of the Gospel. Does the church live this way? Are we encouragers or discouragers? Are we carrying the Gospel around in our pockets to pull out and use as needed, or are we wearing the Gospel at all times and in all places, thus allowing our lives to resonate with faith, hope, and love as a *way of life*? The Church at Thessalonica did just that, and the evidence that sounded forth from their lives has continued to echo for generations. Let's listen.

Going Deeper

Begin prayerfully, using this antiphonal reading from **Psalm 136:1-5, 26.**

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good

Group Members: For his steadfast love endures forever

Leader: Give thanks to the God of gods

Group Members: For his steadfast love endures forever

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord of lords

Group Members: For his steadfast love endures forever

Leader: To him who alone does great wonders

Group Members: For his steadfast love endures forever

Leader: To him who by understanding made the heavens

Group Members: For his steadfast love endures forever

Leader: Give thanks to the God of heaven

Group Members: For his steadfast love endures forever

Did you hear how the phrase, "for his steadfast love endures forever" resonated or echoed as it was recited over and over? This is how our lives should be; they should echo the Gospel of faith, hope, and love wherever we go.

Talk about some specific everyday places and scenarios where you need to "be the church." In what ways do you need to adjust your life to resonate the Gospel in those places?

Making It Stick

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3.

Is there evidence of the reality of faith in your life?

- What specific virtues do you see displayed in your life that could convince someone that faith is real and at work in you?

Evidence Test:

Do you see ...

- Faith that works in your life? (James 1:22, 2:14-17)
- Love that labors? (Romans 5:5, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Colossians 3:12-17)
- Hope that sustains? (1 Thessalonians 4:13, Romans 15:13)

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7.

Are there examples of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?

- Share some examples, or better yet, ask group members to share examples they see in others within the group.
- Do you see yourself as an imitator of Christ? Do others see you as an imitator of Christ?
- Discuss areas of your life in which you can be a better imitator of Christ.
- Do you consider yourself an ambassador for Christ (are you readily sharing and discussing the Gospel with unbelievers)?

Read Acts 1:8 and talk about what enables and equips us to be examples, imitators, and ambassadors of Christ. Give examples of how you've seen this happen in your life.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:8.

Are you living as a missional believer or a motionless Christian? In other words, are you actively thinking and behaving like a missionary in order to engage others with the Gospel message, or are you sitting and soaking, never putting your faith into action?

The Thessalonian church didn't have to "tell" what they were doing so everyone could hear; they lived out the Gospel and it echoed everywhere. How about you? Do you tell, or is your life so authentic that it echoes the Gospel without words?

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10.

Are you waiting expectantly for the promise of Christ's return?

- How are you spending your time? Are you enthralled with idol worship, or worshiping the One who can truly satisfy your soul?
- Are you waiting with patient endurance? (Hebrews 10:36-39, Revelation 14:12, James 5:10-11)

Read Hebrews 10:19-25 – Are you encouraging others in life?

As the coming of Christ gets closer and closer, we must be encouragers for Christ and inspire others to speak life, not death, into the lives of others. Who can you "speak life" into this week?

Living It Out

Send a note of encouragement to someone this week.

Simply find a verse, write it on a note card, and speak life into a weary and burdened heart.

Remember our 40 Days of Giving leading up to Easter.

\$1 a day for 40 days