

## Small Group Discussion Guide — Read 1 Thess 1:1-3 & Acts 17:1-10

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- Joshua mentioned that one of the challenges the western church today is facing is “the loss of a culturally shared backdrop.” What does that mean? How is this a challenge from even just a generation ago? What will this mean in our engagement with the culture around us that is growingly hostile to the gospel, and the ethical implications of the gospel?
- According to Acts 17:1-10, what were the circumstances surrounding this new, young church plant? What were the dangers they were facing? Why is Paul so concerned for them?
- Given the context of opposition, why would it have been particularly helpful to refer to the church as “in God” and “in Christ” in vs. 1?
- According to vs. 2-3, what is Paul thanking God for that he sees at work in lives of the Thessalonians? How do we reconcile that these efforts were their own (*their works of faith, labors of love, and steadfastness of hope*), but that ultimately it was God who was producing these graces in them?
- How was the gospel the only power to produce these graces in their lives? Why is so important that we rely solely on the gospel?
- In what ways should our faith in Christ motivate good works? What does the apostle James mean by a “dead faith”? (James 2:26)
- How does God’s love being poured into our hearts necessarily result in our labors of love for God, for the church, and for even our enemies? (see Gal 5:6; 1 Jn 3:14-18) What would you say to someone who claims to believe the facts of the gospel, but evidences no works of faith or labors of love?
- How should “hope” play more of a part in the way we live our Christian lives daily? How should the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ affect us now? (see 1:3, 10; 3:11-13; 5:23-24)
- How is Paul’s gratitude a model for us in the church? What is the example for us here that Paul would begin with gratitude to God rather than criticism for this church? Are you more prone to be aware of God’s grace at work in the church, or more prone to noticing the church’s weaknesses? What can we learn from Paul? How should this model inform our prayers for one another?